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## 'Egypt's role indispensable'

Replying to Israeli attacks on Egypt and vowing never to put pressure on Arafat, Mubarak declared the Egyptian role in Middle East peace pivotal. **Nevine Khalil reports**

President Hosni Mubarak yesterday rejected Israeli charges that Egypt was playing an "unbalanced" role in the Middle East peace process, describing Egyptian efforts as active, pivotal and indispensable. However, he added, he was not prepared to put pressure on Yasser Arafat to accept Israeli proposals for resolving the problem of the West Bank town of Hebron. "This will never happen," he said.

Mubarak was addressing a news conference, called to respond to Israeli reports that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had decided to dispatch his adviser, Dore Gold, to Cairo, to forestall an Egyptian attempt to play a high-level mediatory role in the stalled Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. The Gold visit had been decided, Israel radio claimed, after Netanyahu rejected an Egyptian request for Foreign Minister Amr Moussa to take part in a shuttle mission between Israel and the Palestinians.

Not true, said Mubarak. He said he was "shocked" by the Israeli version of events, which was probably intended for local consumption.

According to Mubarak, the story began with a meeting in Lisbon between Netanyahu and Moussa, who agreed to meet with the prime minister again in Israel to continue their discussions. And following a visit by Arafat to Cairo on Saturday, Mubarak telephoned Netanyahu and offered to send Moussa to Israel.

Netanyahu responded that preparations should be made first for the Moussa visit. "I agreed to that," Mubarak said. "So today [yesterday] he is sending his adviser, Dore Gold" to Cairo. The Israelis had not rejected Egyptian mediation, he added.

On the question of redeployment from Hebron, Mubarak discounted Israeli claims that the problems surrounding redeployment from the city had almost been resolved. "They say that only two per cent is unresolved, but the problem still remains as it was. Nothing has been solved. The main issues of hot pursuit, joint patrols and Al-Shohada Street are still the same and have not been solved. More than 80 per cent of the problem still exists," he said.

"It is not true that our role is unbalanced. They want us to pressure Arafat to accept

their proposals regardless of whether or not Palestinian public opinion agrees to them, or whether Arafat finds them suitable or not. This will never happen."

Mubarak also rejected the Israeli claim that Egypt had opted for an "armed peace."

"Egypt is a country for peace," he said. "We work for peace. If we did not, then why did Sadat visit Israel and take an initiative in 1977? For the sake of war? Egypt is pivotal in moving the peace process forward and is the party which began the peace process. It paid a high price for peace when it was isolated by the Arab countries for nearly 10 years."

"If someone says that Egypt does not want peace, it is he who does not want peace. The atmosphere of war might be more beneficial for him."

Asked whether Egypt had offered to host a meeting between Netanyahu and Arafat, Mubarak said that such a summit could only be arranged "if the problems are solved or about to be solved, with only a few points remaining. Then we can invite the two parties to end the problem. However, the problem is still there... The Pal-

estian leadership cannot accept [the Israeli proposals] because it has a people to answer to."

Mubarak was also asked about a statement by Netanyahu that Egypt might have a role to play in resolving the problem of Hebron. Netanyahu "should not say that Egypt might have a role, because the Egyptian role is pivotal to the peace process," responded Mubarak. "It is not a question of 'might and might not' because the Egyptian role is active and indispensable."

He described "Middle Easternism" — the concept of an Arab-Israeli grouping — as "unrealistic as long as we have not solved the problem. We cannot enter Middle Easternism from the backdoor." The Arab League, he said, "is the house of the Arabs. No one can interfere with it, whether Israel or anyone else."

On the question of the relations between Egypt and Syria, Mubarak thought it was unlikely that Israel would attack Syria. "Hitting Syria would be very dangerous for the region. The Israelis have said they have no intention of going to war. Neither has Syria. War is an old game."

Israel would be the loser if it forced Egypt to break off diplomatic relations, Mubarak said, adding: "We are not considering this step."

Mubarak stressed that while the US had the principal role in the peace process, the Egyptian role could not be marginalised. "Let us see what they will do without Egypt... In the absence of the Egyptian role, the Madrid conference would not have been held," he said.

The establishment of a Palestinian state was inevitable, he said. "But this does not mean that it will threaten Israel, Egypt or Jordan. There are preconditions, such as disarmament, and they could be the subject of negotiation."

Mubarak said the whole world opposed the construction of Israeli settlements in occupied Arab lands. "As I have said more than once, settlements are a time-bomb that is bound to explode and pose the greatest obstacle to a final solution. It will create a problem for Israel as much as for the Arab region. The US and Europe do not agree to it. The whole world does not agree to it, but they [Israel] insist on it."

### Rights revoked

THE US consul general in Jerusalem, Edward G. Abington, accused Israel on Tuesday of discriminating against Palestinian-American residents of Jerusalem by threatening to revoke their residency rights unless they give up their American passports. Targeted by the threats, the AP reported, are Palestinians who live in the parts of Jerusalem captured by Israel in the 1967 Mid-East War. They have permanent residency rights in Jerusalem, but are not Israeli citizens.

Palestinians and local human rights groups say that in recent months, the Israeli Interior Ministry has revoked hundreds of residency permits in an effort to reduce the number of Palestinians in Jerusalem and strengthen Israel's claim to the city.

Abington stated that though the Israeli Interior Ministry had given him official assurances that no such policy exists, procedures continue, however, and that he knew of 60 cases of Palestinian-American who received such threats.

### Hamas option

BURNING an Israeli flag, more than 1,000 members of the Islamist group Hamas demonstrated at Gaza's Islamic University yesterday to mark the ninth anniversary of the start of the Palestinian Intifada, which lasted from 1987 to 1994.

According to the French news agency AFP, witnesses said that youth wore headbands emblazoned with the words, "Ezzeddin Al-Qassam Brigades", the name of Hamas' military wing.

Following this demonstration, Hamas plans to stage a rally on Friday in Khan Younis. The rally will be the first permitted in the last year by the Palestinian Authority, and has already sparked criticism by Israel that the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, was sending a veiled warning that the "Hamas option" still exists if negotiations with Israel remain deadlocked.

### Levi blast

ISRAELI Foreign Minister David Levy blasted an Israeli general's warning that Syria would be "clobbered" if it started a war, saying that such declarations only stoke the tensions with Damascus when both sides should be working towards a return to peace negotiations. Levy was referring to a speech by deputy chief of staff General Mattan Viliani on Monday, in which he confirmed that the Israeli Army was prepared for war with Syria.

Levy was also quoted by the Israeli daily *Yediot Aharanot* as telling an audience at a closed-door political meeting that Israel must give up territory on the Golan Heights to secure peace with Syria, a position opposed by the governing rightist coalition.

## Jerusalem breached

PALESTINIAN leader Yasser Arafat charged yesterday that an unprecedented Israeli plan to build Jewish homes in the heart of an Arab neighbourhood in annexed East Jerusalem was a serious violation of Palestinian-Israeli agreements.

"This is a very serious breach of what has been agreed upon," Arafat told reporters at his Gaza City headquarters. Under the signed peace accords "not one single house should be added to any settlement" in the Occupied Territories.

Arafat was responding to a decision by the Planning and Construction Commission of the Israeli Interior Ministry authorising the construction of 132 homes for Israelis in East Jerusalem's Ras Al-Amud neighbourhood, where 11,000 Palestinians live. The Jewish enclave will be built on an area of 3.5 acres bought by Miami millionaire Irving Moskowitz.

According to the French news agency AFP, the 132 homes will be the first to be built specifically for Jews in the middle of East Jerusalem, which Israel captured and annexed in 1967. Jewish settlers in Jerusalem are "central capital", the Palestinians also want to establish a capital in the eastern sector of the city.

Senior Palestinian officials held talks yesterday at Orient House, the PLO headquarters in Jerusalem, to discuss their strategy for fighting the building plans. Participants included Faisal Husseini, Arafat's senior representative in Jerusalem, and members of the Palestinian legislative council.

Palestinian officials have warned that there would be new outbreaks of violence should Israel go ahead with the project, and Israeli peace activists have said the Ras Al-Amud plans set a dangerous precedent in Jerusalem. They noted that while previous Israeli governments have built a ring of Jewish neighbourhoods around the Arab sector, they had not built homes for Jews on a large scale inside Arab districts.

Israeli press reports said the United States had asked Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to refrain from granting immediate approval to the plan so as not to worsen the crisis facing the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations on implementation of the Oslo autonomy agreements.



Israeli soldiers order Palestinian demonstrators to leave confiscated land in the Jordan Valley in the West Bank. Over 100 demonstrators had stopped an Israeli settlers' bulldozer from working in protest against the settlers' claim to the land, which is controlled by the Israeli military authorities (photo: Reuters)

## Scramble over Africa's nominee

Ghali is still favourite for the UN's top job, but Amr Moussa stressed that Egypt's priority is for an African to be at the helm, write **Hoda Tawfik in New York and Gamal Nkrumah in Cairo**

The United Nations Security Council conducted its first unofficial poll for the post of UN secretary-general on Tuesday. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the incumbent secretary-general, is not presenting his candidacy to another vote "for the time being," but he has not withdrawn from the race. Ghali told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that his move — not to put his name forward for a second vote — was meant to leave the stage open for other African candidates to have a go. Ghali reminded the *Weekly* that he remains the sole candidate of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). He affirmed that he was watching the proceedings at the Security Council and waiting to see the results.

Ghali suspended his candidacy a day before the nomination of Madeleine Albright, the United States permanent representative to the UN, as secretary of state. Soon after, four African countries — Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mauritania and Niger — officially presented to the Security Council their respective candidates. Tanzania is expected to submit a fifth candidate — OAU Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim. The latter is a favourite of South Africa, but France indicated that it will veto Salim because he does not speak French. Paris is also known to be lukewarm about the other Anglophone candidate — Ghana's Kofi Annan.

The results of Tuesday's secret ballot at the Security Council were telling. Annan obtained the required votes, but faced one veto, probably from France. The three other candidates each faced two vetoes, probably from Britain and America. Annan got 10 votes. Côte d'Ivoire's Foreign Minister Amara Essy, a former president of the UN General Assembly, got seven affirmative votes. The Organisation of Islamic Conference's (OIC) secretary-general, Hamid Al-Ghaddi, who is a Niger national, won only five votes. Malaysian Ahmed Ould Abdallah won three "yes" votes.

Al-Ghaddi failed to get the OIC coun-

tries to back him officially at the ministerial conference that took place in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, last week. While a number of Muslim nations might prefer to see Al-Ghaddi at the helm of the UN, he is regarded as rather lacklustre. He has no proven record of dealing with sensitive situations or working under the pressure of budgetary constraints and has no real knowledge of how the UN actually works.

France is said to be keen to see one of the three Francophone candidates become UN secretary-general when Ghali's mandate expires on 31 December. But observers believe that initial French objections to Ghana's Kofi Annan are not serious. Annan, after all, is fluent in French and the French, like the Americans, have been impressed with his smooth and self-effacing performance in Bosnia.

Annan, the UN undersecretary-general for peacekeeping, has spent over 30 years working in various UN departments. He was based in Geneva for a few years where he studied at the Institut Universitaire des Hautes Etudes Internationales. Annan now heads the UN's international peacekeeping force in the former Yugoslavia. In the aftermath of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Annan conducted negotiations that led to the safe passage of thousands of foreigners stranded in Kuwait. For this and other deeds, he received international acclaim.

Marwan Badr, Egypt's assistant foreign minister for African affairs, told the *Weekly* that only one African country, Rwanda, openly objected to the re-election of the Egyptian incumbent, on the grounds that Ghali did not avert the mass slaughter of ethnic Tutsi in 1994. The Rwandans claim that Ghali cooperated too closely with Paris, which backed the ousted Rwandan regime that carried out the massacres. However, despite its protest, Rwanda did not stand in the way of the OAU nominating Ghali as its sole candidate. Badr emphasised that

Egypt's top priority is not that Ghali gets a second term as UN secretary-general, but that the top office goes to an African candidate — be that Ghali or not. Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said as much at a conference about Egypt and Middle Easternism convened last week at Cairo University.

A senior UN diplomat told the *Weekly* that the results of the UN Security Council's secret ballot indicated that the US and Britain might be coordinating their approach. The US and Britain are suspected of using the veto against the three Francophone candidates. Britain and the US, which always said that it did not favour any particular candidate, stand firmly behind Annan, the diplomat said.

Former US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger was quoted as saying, "The Boutros Ghali affair has been monstrously handled by Albright. She is like a bulldog who gets its teeth into the bone and won't let go. We may well get him out, but at a high cost to ourselves both in the UN and internationally. And there is a good chance that whoever takes his place will be even worse."

An authoritative source close to Ghali told the *Weekly* that the Egyptian was offered the post of head of an international foundation and the title of secretary-general emeritus by the Clinton administration to lure him into leaving office. But Ghali said, "No, thank you. I am not looking for a job."

Security Council members were scheduled to resume secret balloting on the same four candidates yesterday. If the results of the voting prove identical to the previous one, the council will face an impasse. If new candidates like Salim emerge, the council can put them to a vote 48 hours after they have presented their official candidacy. Nabil El-Arabi, Egyptian permanent representative at the UN, told the *Weekly*, "Egypt's first priority now is to make sure that the post of secretary-general remains for Africa."

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## Taking stock of our political heritage

Why play historical guessing games? Let's be methodical about our political heritage, argues Hoda Gamal Abdel-Nasser

The 26th anniversary of the death of Charles de Gaulle fell on 9 November 1996 and the 26th anniversary of the passing away of Gamal Abdel-Nasser fell on 28 September of the same year. I am filled with anguish when I compare what the French did to perpetuate the De Gaulle legacy and what we Egyptians did to preserve the legacy of Nasser, who died at the end of the Arab summit of September 1970, convened to stop the shedding of Palestinian blood. De Gaulle died after he had been removed from office by a public referendum held in 1969. Soon after his death, his friends and followers wasted no time in establishing the Charles de Gaulle Institute. Those who had worked with De Gaulle collected memorabilia, historical documents, testimonials, films and photographs.

The Charles de Gaulle Institute developed over the years into a veritable institution with a network of correspondents in all parts of the world. I am indeed honoured to be its correspondent in Egypt. My appointment was a result of a study I had presented to the institute at a conference held at UNESCO's Paris headquarters in 1990 to mark the 100th birthday of the great leader. My study, entitled "Nasserist Egypt: Perceptions of De Gaulle," was published by the institute along with other studies and appeared in a seven-volume work. At the end of the conference, participants were taken to visit De Gaulle's house and grave in his hometown of Colombes les Deux Eglises. We also attended a mass held in his memory at the Notre Dame cathedral in Paris.

The conference to commemorate De Gaulle was held when the Socialist government led by the late French President François Mitterrand — himself a one-time arch-enemy of De Gaulle and his rival in presidential elections — was in power. In fact, Michel Rocard, the Socialist prime minister at the time, inaugurated the conference. Since its creation after the death of De Gaulle, the institute has been publishing a trimestrial magazine, *L'Esprit*, dedicated to the collection of mementos and testimonials of people who had been De Gaulle's colleagues.

Nasser died at one of the most critical moments of Arab history. Nasser was succeeded by his vice-president, Anwar El-Sadat, who had been at his side since the beginning of the 1952 Revolution. From the outset, Sadat saw it that all who had been close to Nasser were banished from public life. He threw most of them in prison on 15 May 1971 — just like Hatshepsut's successor, who wiped her name from the walls of El-Deir El-Bahri Temple in Luxor and had his inscriptions put there instead.

Today the achievements of leaders are not assessed by the temples or monuments they built, but by another yardstick: how much they have raised the living standards of their people and uplifted their societies both economically and politically. Sadat established the Committee for Writing History, the impartiality of which is called into question by most historians. Furthermore, Sadat set out to write his own memoirs of Nasser's time. He ordered the withdrawal from the market of the first part of his autobiography, which was Nasser, published in 1970 and entitled *Ya Waladi, Hoda Amika Gamal* (My Son, This is Your Uncle Gamal). He attempted to re-write history. The accomplishments of Nasser, which could not have been ascribed to another, were expressed in history books in the passive voice. Thus, in 1956 "the Suez Canal was nationalised" and in 1954 "the British evacuated from Egypt." But the history teachers would not allow such ambiguities to persist and ascribed the achievements to their rightful originator.

The success of the film *Nasser '56* among youth did not come as a surprise. The truth about Nasser had been secretly flourishing in Egyptian homes and classrooms. This has been outlined in Nabil Abdel-Fattah's study *1956: Its Political Legality*, presented at a seminar commemorating the 40th anniversary of the 1956 tripartite aggression and held at the Centre for Economic, Legal and Social Documents of the National Centre for Scientific Studies in Paris. The attempts to obliterate the memory of the nation and to distort its history must never be allowed to happen again. Thus, the recently established Al-Ahram Unit for Studies on the Egyptian Revolution has decided to make a number of initiatives simultaneously, to make up for what has been lost. Fortunately, modern information technology has provided us with enormous possibilities for the documentation and analysis of data at great speed.

The plan designed by the Unit for Studies on the Egyptian Revolution will not limit itself to the documentation of the post-Revolution period, since the pre-Revolution period is fraught with information gaps and analytical distortions which must be corrected by the support of relevant documents. I became myself aware of these realities while I was involved in the groundwork for my doctoral dissertation. I limited the scope of my work to "The Egyptian Movement 1936-1952". Why should students rely on foreign sources because Egyptian sources are scarce? The unit has thus decided to provide accurate and impartial chronicles of all the Egyptian nationalist leaders. The list begins with Mustafa Kamel, Mohamed Farid, Saad Zaghloul, Mustafa El-Nahas, Gamal Abdel-Nasser and Anwar El-Sadat. To guarantee that justice is done in the documentation of Sadat's rule, I call on his son Gamal to collaborate in covering his father's period. For Saad Zaghloul and Mustafa El-Nahas, we will strive to find blood relations and not party members, since I have learnt through bitter experience over the past 26 years that partisan political and party interests usually prevail over all other ties, regardless of how close such members may have been to the person in question. A son is expected to be the most genuinely inclined to find for his father's image.

Safia Zaghloul was aware of this reality early enough. Upon her husband's death, she refused to give the Wafd or any other party, which sought to bolster its credibility by associating with the great leader, access to *Beit El-Umma* (his house). With regards to Mustafa Kamel and Mohamed Farid, I will undertake the chronicling procedure. I intend call on anybody in possession of any mementos of any kind, be it a document, film, coin, medal or postal stamp or any other memorabilia inherited within the family which has to do with the two prominent figures, to allow the unit to obtain a copy of it. I equally call on anybody who played even the smallest part in the lives of the two men to provide us with his testimony, be it in writing or on tape.

The unit is equally interested in receiving feedback of personal impressions about Egyptian leaders before or after 1952. The invitation is extended to Egyptians, Arabs, people from the Third World and individuals throughout the world.

It is time we learned from past experience and gave special attention to the documenting and updating of our nation's history. We need to address the challenges of the 21st century by taking a retrospective look into the history of the 20th century.

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# Housing storm rages still

For the third time in three weeks, the Housing Committee of the People's Assembly was the scene of a stormy debate over construction code violations. Gamal Essam El-Din reports

As construction offences continued to make headlines in the Arabic-language press, Housing Minister Ibrahim Suleiman told the People's Assembly that construction code violations had been discovered in dozens of apartment buildings in the eastern suburb of Nasr City, in Qatamiya, southeast of Cairo, and in the city of Suez. Suleiman cited 41 faulty buildings in Nasr City, 112 buildings in Qatamiya and 114 in Suez City. All had been built by the Organisation of Housing Cooperatives, an affiliate of the Ministry of Housing.

Assembly Speaker Ahmed Fathi Sorour barred MPs from debating Suleiman's statement, quoting the internal regulations of the house. As a result, the debate shifted back to the Assembly's Housing Committee, which held its third stormy meeting in three weeks to discuss the building regulations last Sunday.

Many committee members, despite their own membership of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), placed the blame for the "housing disasters" squarely on government officials.

In his Saturday report to the Assembly, Suleiman said that no decision had yet been taken to demolish the faulty buildings, which would be examined by the ministry's Building Research Centre before a final decision was made. He vowed that those responsible for the violations would be brought to justice.

The 41 faulty buildings in the 10th district of Nasr City had been built by two private sector companies for the Organisation of Housing Cooperatives, Suleiman told the house. Construction was completed in May 1993 and cracks appeared in three buildings in October 1994. Two buildings have been evacuated and the Building Research Centre was examining the others, the minister added. In Qatamiya, "grave violations" were found in 112 buildings out of a total of 129, he said. A public sector company had constructed 112 of those buildings for the Organisation of Housing Cooperatives while the remaining 17 were built by a private company for the same organisation. These buildings have never been occupied, the minister said.

In Suez City, defects were found in two housing projects owned by the organisation. The first project, Suleiman said, consists of 173 buildings, constructed by a public sector company; the second has 69 buildings. Suleiman said 50 buildings in the first project were found to be faulty and will have to be demolished. In the second project, 64 buildings were faulty and the offences in 29 of these were "quite grave".

After Suleiman finished his report, Speaker Sorour referred all questions tabled by MPs to a meeting of the housing committee scheduled for the following day. This meeting was attended by Suleiman as well as Local Administration Minister Mahmoud El-Sherif and Cairo Governor Omar Abdel-Akher.

In the unexpected absence of the committee's chairman, Mohamed Mahmoud Ali Hassan, the meeting was chaired by deputy chairman Talaat Mustafa, a business tycoon who owns seven contracting companies. The meeting was so tumultuous that it was abruptly ended by Mustafa after he came under fire from a group of deputies led by Ibrahim Amasha, an NDP representative from Manzala in the Daqia Governorate, and Mustafa El-Qayali, the NDP deputy for Atfiya in the Giza Governorate.

Abdel-Moneim Zaslouq, an NDP representative for Dessouq in the Kafr Al-Sheikh Governorate, blamed the construction violations on Law 106 of 1976, which encouraged the sale, rather than renting out, of apartment buildings. He also blamed a complicated urban planning law, the lack of supervision over what construction materials are used, and the lack of clear-cut building zones in major cities.

Yehia Abu Sleit, an NDP deputy for Mina Al-Basal in Alexandria cited other reasons: corruption in municipal councils, legal loopholes, the complicated procedures for acquiring construction and demolition licences and the lack of a comprehensive housing and construction law.

Ahmed Shiba, a businessman deputy for Cairo's Al-Darb Al-Ahmar district, put the blame on low-ranking employees of municipal councils, who, he maintained, should take much of the blame for the situation. "These employees,

who are largely responsible for most construction offences, are now in the highest income brackets in this country," he said. He estimated that there are some 700,000 violations of construction law across the country. "We cannot afford the time or money" to demolish the faulty buildings and unlicensed extra storeys, he said. Instead he suggested imposing a double fine on offenders and using the money, which he estimated would amount to some LE10 billion, to develop new housing communities.

At this point, Minister of Local Administration Mahmoud El-Sherif was given the floor to provide the government perspective on the problem. Reviewing the housing and construction laws of the past 20 years, El-Sherif said that each of them had been passed in response to a certain situation. "In 1976, when offences were on the rise, penalties had to be stiffened and this was done by means of Law 106. When the situation improved in 1983, Law 30 was passed, opening the door for a reconciliation between the offender and the authorities," El-Sherif said.

A new law had had to be passed every four years, on average, but "although a new construction law was passed at the beginning of this year, apparently it was insufficient to deal with the problem of construction offences," El-Sherif said. "This is not the time for exchanging accusations because all of us stand accused. It is the problem of a whole society and not the problem of local administration alone."

Providing the first official figures, El-Sherif said there are 573,889 construction violations throughout the country. This figure, he said, includes around 218,000 buildings which lack a construction licence and 102,000 buildings where extra storeys have been added without a licence. "So the problem is not as bad as the press has pictured it, and most of the problems could be settled by the payment of a fine," El-Sherif said.

Cairo Governor Omar Abdel-Akher, who was criticised by MPs for not attending the previous week's meeting, said that Law 30 of 1983 entrusted committees of engineers with the task of dealing with construction offences. But the problem was complicated because offenders have the right to contest the committees' decisions in the courts, he said. The solution, in his view, is that "local administration departments should be freed from all restrictions and made solely responsible for settling construction offences."

MPs were obviously dissatisfied with El-Sherif's and Abdel-Akher's statements. Fathi El-Baradi, an independent-turned-NDP deputy for Kafr Al-Zayyat, said: "I think we were all disappointed by El-Sherif's statement. We thought that the local administration, which is entrusted with enforcing the law, would show us a way out of this crisis. But what we conclude from El-Sherif's statement is that he despairs of the situation and cannot come up with any clear-cut solution."

El-Baradi was interrupted by El-Sherif, who said that the government has plenty of solutions, but "we just wanted to listen first to the solutions which you propose."

"We have merely mentioned some of the causes of the problems and we have solutions for them. We needed to listen first to your solutions, if you have any," added Abdel-Akher.

He went on to indirectly criticise El-Baradi, who is dean of the Engineering Faculty at Tama University and the owner of an engineering consultancy office, by recounting a story in him showing how engineering professors, "such as yourself," help businessmen commit construction offences.

At this point, the committee's Deputy Chairman Talaat Mustafa became involved in a verbal clash with two members, Ibrahim Amasha and Mustafa El-Qayali. The two accused Mustafa of giving the floor only to "those whose own interests motivate them to support the government."

"We are not among those millionaire contractors who attend meetings to say what the government likes to hear," added Ibrahim Bardisi, an NDP member for the Cairo district of Gamaliya. At this point Mustafa brought the meeting to a halt, declaring that he would submit a report to Speaker Sorour on those who had forced him to do so.

## Rain lessons

The mid-November rains caused extensive damage to the nature reserve at Ras Mohamed, but park officials say the storms have taught them more about the area. Jailan Halawi reports

Ras Mohamed National Park, at the southernmost point of the Sinai Peninsula, is located at the spot where the Red Sea divides into the Gulf of Aqaba to the east and the Gulf of Suez to the west. It was declared a protected area by the government in 1983 to safeguard its coral reefs, animals and plants from outside influences, primarily man.

In mid-November, Ras Mohamed, along with other sections of the Red Sea coast and Upper Egypt, was hit by torrential rains, which caused widespread devastation. Michael Pearson, the national park's project manager, estimated that Ras Mohamed suffered between LE2.5 and 3 million-worth of damage, with roads, laboratories and workshops all in need of repair.

Piles of rubbish were carried by the floods to the shore. Dried bushes, twigs and bits and pieces of wood littered the space outside the laboratories. "Nothing serious, but we have a lot of work to do," Pearson commented.

The underwater sights have also been affected by the rains, which have reduced visibility. According to Pearson, these areas are, by nature, subject to wave action and it will take months before the situation reverts to normal. "These sites have a sandy bottom with reefs on two sides, and sand is suspended by the wave action which is also why one finds different types of corals, different reef structures. These sights are subject to different physical conditions, so visibility there is not as clear as in other areas," he said.

Although the rains have left a lot of work to be done, Pearson believes that, in the long run, they will



Photo: Corry Pearson

prove to be to the park's advantage, because "we can now predict certain events". The main flow lines in the event of heavy rain have been identified, for example, "and this will cost the government less money to repair the roads in the future," he said.

Park workers are now in the process of marking the road, so that they can remove the sand that was washed over it without destroying the tarmac beneath. "There are areas where we will have to put drains, there are places where we will have to bury our electrical cables to protect them," Pearson said.

"And the water pipelines which run through the park and feed Sharm El-Sheikh will have to be protected."

According to Pearson, the rains have highlighted the necessity for better planning and understanding of the nature of Sinai, a region whose topography has been shaped by natural disasters. "It is such events which created Sinai; they have been taking place for thousands of years and they don't stop just because we start building. We must learn to understand these events in order to protect property, investment and life."

## Wanted dead or alive

A visitor from an Arab country checks into a government hospital. He emerges from surgery with a new kidney — illegally donated by an Egyptian engineer, the price: LE15,000. With the help of forged documents from the Doctors Syndicate authorising the transplant, the operation was carried out in the Agria Hospital in Dokki last month. Details of the illegal transaction were disclosed in *Al-Mussawwar* magazine, once more stirring the controversy over organ donations in Egypt.

Hamdy El-Sayed, head of the Doctors Syndicate, said the doctor who performed this operation would be disciplined and that an inquiry into this case and other, similar, ones is under way. "However, we cannot take legal action, because there is no law regulating the transplant of organs in Egypt."

According to syndicate regulations, organ transplants from an Egyptian to a non-Egyptian are "absolutely forbidden" and so are organ transplants between two foreigners of different nationalities.

Egyptians who need organ transplants must find a relative; even a third cousin is acceptable, El-Sayed explained. "Someone can accept an organ for transplant from an unrelated person only in exceptional cases, for instance, if the family carries a hereditary disease which prevents donation from within the family. Even in such cases, the donor must be interviewed by the syndicate and must sign a certificate to say that he is donating his organ from humanitarian and not financial motives."

The regulations, introduced in 1988, were a response to the growing trend of non-Egyptians coming into the country for organ transplant operations using Egyptian donors, said El-Sayed. "This stopped, or we thought it had stopped, for a time. But it is reappearing again, controlled by a mafia which has a trade with very wealthy people coming from the Gulf."

Unless there is a law regulating the transplant of organs in Egypt, illegal operations will not stop, warned a frustrated El-Sayed, who spoke extensively of the repeated failures of the syndicate to get a law governing organ donation passed in the People's Assembly. "Every time we try, our efforts are thwarted by those religious elements who con-

sider transplanting an organ from a dead person to a living one to be against Islam. They are powerful voices in the People's Assembly... Sometimes we wonder who is financing this, because it is obviously a very costly campaign."

Opponents of organ transplants, such as television preacher Sheikh Mohamed El-Shaarawy, contend that human organs are not for trading and that the body does not belong to the individual but to God, who alone has the right to dispose of it as he pleases.

However, a *fatwa* issued by the former Mufti, Sayed Tantawi, now Sheikh of Al-Azhar, sanctioning organ transplants, has long been in force; and countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have laws allowing organ transplants, including the use of organs from dead bodies.

Sayed El-Tawil, a professor at the Faculty of Islamic Studies at Al-Azhar University, said that from the point of view of *shari'a* law, organ donation "can, in fact, be recommended if it is going to save someone's life." The transfer of an organ from a dead body to a living patient is also condoned by *shari'a*, if the dead person has written his consent into his will, he added. If not, then it is possible with the consent of the relatives, if it is strictly for humanitarian purposes.

The authorisation to carry out transplants from cadavers, currently prohibited by the syndicate, would be instrumental in saving lives, stressed Rafiq Rashad, kidney specialist at the Cairo Kidney Centre.

The need for kidney transplants is overwhelming. Every year, there are between 6,000-7,000 patients on dialysis (the clinical purification of blood through the separation of particles in a liquid) in Egypt. Dialysis, explained Rashad, should be a transitional treatment. If those patients were

able to receive transplants their quality of life would improve greatly. Currently, only 300-400 kidney transplants are performed annually.

Not surprisingly, the real problem is the lack of available kidneys. At the Cairo Kidney Centre, only around 30 per cent of donors are relatives. "Sometimes we cannot find a suitable match from the patient's relatives and so we look for someone else," said Rashad. "This is done on a strictly Egyptian basis. The approval of the donor and the syndicate is, of course, mandatory."

If, on the other hand, transplants from cadavers were permitted, the number of patients treated could be at least tripled. "The organs of recently deceased persons could help us save the lives of many dying patients. The difference is that you could save those who needed transplants of organs which cannot be donated from living people, such as the liver, heart and the lungs." Organs must be removed from the body immediately after death. "A few minutes after death, a person's kidneys or liver, for instance, become unusable," Rashad explained.

He believes that if cadaveric kidneys were available, the black market in human organs would disappear because people would have a legitimate channel for obtaining organs.

Fawzia Abdel-Sattar, professor of criminal law and former chairwoman of the Legislative Committee of the People's Assembly, emphasised that the failure to issue legislation regulating organ transplants is closely linked to the debate over the definition of death: does it occur when the brain stops functioning, or only when the heart stops beating? This definition is important because it determines how soon a doctor would be able to remove organs for transplant. "If the public perceives that death occurs only when the heart stops beating, then the People's Assembly cannot impose a law that stipulates that it is all right to take a patient's organs once his brain stops, even if the doctors say it is," she said.

Only when the public is fully convinced that deactivation (death of the brain) is the "real" death, would such legislation gain widespread public support, she believes.

## Licence to preach

In a continuing drive to isolate religious extremists, the People's Assembly passed a new law requiring Muslim preachers to obtain a government permit

The People's Assembly has passed a new law making it compulsory for mosque preachers to obtain a permit from the Ministry of *Al-Awqaf* (religious endowments), reports Gamal Essam El-Din. According to its explanatory note, the law is aimed at tightening the ministry's grip on mosques, particularly those which do not fall directly under its supervision. It intends to ensure that the sermons and religious lessons delivered in them are in line with orthodox Islamic teaching and that pupils are not abused by those "with deviant thinking" to disseminate distorted concepts of Islam.

The new law, which is an amendment of Law 272 of 1959, states: "The minister of *al-awqaf* will outline the conditions which should be met by persons qualified to deliver sermons and religious lessons in mosques, and the measures which they should take to obtain a permit from the Ministry of *Al-Awqaf* for doing so."

Violators will be subject to a fine ranging from LE100 to LE300 and/or a maximum of one month in jail.

According to Hamdi Zaqqouq, minister of *al-awqaf*, the law had been drawn up in response to pressure from deputies, who had repeatedly urged the ministry to exercise greater control over sermons delivered in mosques, particularly during the Friday noon prayers.

"Preachers who have personal ambitions or seek popularity should not have a place in the propagation of Islam," Zaqqouq said, adding that most Islamic countries have imposed similar restrictions on preachers.

According to Zaqqouq, a committee of two ministry officials and two *Al-Azhar* clerics will be formed in each governorate to deal with applications for permits to preach. And in its drive to bring all mosques under its supervision, the government will provide the ministry with an additional annual budget of LE50 million. Six thousand additional mosques will be brought under the ministry's supervision each year, adding up to 30,000 over the next five years, he said.

Although the law, passed on Saturday, was approved by an overwhelming majority, a significant number of MPs emphasised that additional measures should be taken to stem religious extremism.

Yassin Serageddin of the Wafd Party argued that the ministry should convert mosques into "centres for all kinds of social activity, including the combat of illiteracy and the provision of additional tutoring for school students."

However, the law was a vital method of preventing "unqualified 20-year-old adolescents" from delivering sermons in mosques, according to Ahmed Abu Zeid, leader of the National Democratic Party (NDP) majority in parliament. In fact, some of those young men managed to prevent mosque imams from preaching and took their place, speaking about everything, "religion, politics and economics," Abu Zeid said.

Mohamed El-Dohiri, speaking for the leftist Tagammu Party, said the party supported the new law, but stressed that "conditions set by the ministry should not be so hard as to prevent people with enlightened thinking from preaching in mosques."

The Liberal Party's Ragab Hilal Hemeida questioned *Al-Azhar*'s ability to turn out enough preachers to cover all mosques nationwide. But he added that there were volunteer preachers who could be employed to make up for this shortage.

فَكَذًا مِنَ الْأَصْلِ



**Around 30 political experts and opposition party representatives gathered at Cairo University's Faculty of Political Science to debate the future of regional cooperation in the Middle East. The three-day conference focused on the prospects of Arab-Israeli cooperation or Middle Easternism, with participants divided on whether it should be rejected or accepted and possible terms for its acceptance. Alternatives of pan-Arabism and Mediterraneanism were also touched upon. Omayma Abdel-Latif followed the debate**



Photo: Salah Ibrahim

## Ensuring the rights of the disabled

**Awad El-Morr,**  
Chief Justice of the  
Supreme Constitutional  
Court, examines  
legislation that positively  
discriminates in favour of the disabled



The defendant, who is disabled, applied for employment in a public sector corporation — Al-Nasr for Phosphate — claiming that under Law No 39 (1975), amending regulations concerning the rehabilitation of disabled persons, a specified employment quota was to be allocated to the disabled.

Despite the fact that his application was attached to this quota, it was flatly refused by the chairman of the board of this corporation. In consequence of this refusal criminal proceedings were instituted against the chairman. Before the trial court the defendant requested, in addition to symbolic compensation, that he receive all the salaries he would have earned had he been appointed in due time. Before deciding the merits of these claims, the petitioner — in his capacity as the chairman of the aforesaid corporation — invoked the invalidity of articles 10, 13 and 16 of Law No 39 (1975) as amended.

Upon *prima facie* finding by the trial court of the plausibility of his allegations, constitutional case no 8 for the 16th judicial year was entered and the petitioner based the invalidity of the challenged provisions on the following considerations:

First: That prescribing an employment share for persons with disabilities unjustifiably excludes others from competing in this portion, thus denying them equal opportunities under law.

Second: That freedom of contract which the alleged provision ignored derives from the personal freedom endorsed by Article 41 of the Constitution. However, under the challenged provisions, persons less efficient were mandatorily employed in public corporations and administrative departments, thus burdening their finances with undue expenses.

Third: That employing disabled persons directly affects the anticipated increase in national income and the manner of its expected equitable distribution.

Fourth: That people with infirmities should have legal rights to pensions instead of employment quotas under the challenged provisions.

Fifth: That those who refrain from employing disabled persons in their entities were treated as criminal offenders, and if so considered — as did the challenged provisions — their personal freedoms would be unduly restrained.

In examining the constitutional claim, the court first noted that articles 10, 13 and 16 of the law on the rehabilitation of disabled persons should be taken as a whole either in regard to the pursuance of criminal proceedings or in adjudicating the financial claims of the defendant.

The court also based its dismissal of the case on the following considerations:

First: That under Article 10 of the challenged provisions an employment quota not less than five per cent of the total number of employees in each public department or corporation has been allocated to those disabled persons in possession of a certificate of rehabilitation, to the exclusion of others in this portion.

From an analytical perspective, the court clarified, it stated jointly and separately, and in cooperation with international organisations endeavouring to assist disabled persons to develop their abilities and to become as self-reliant as possible in the most varied fields of activities, taking into account their maximum potential, and the need to promote their integration as far as possible in normal life, irrespective of whether their deficiencies are congenital or not, and apart from the nature or the seriousness of their handicaps.

That the declaration on the rights of disabled persons proclaimed by the General Assembly Resolution 3447 of 9 December 1957 — viewed as the common basis and frame of reference for the protection of these rights — provides that rights set forth therein shall be granted to all disabled persons without any exception whatsoever and without distinction or discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion or any other situation applying either to the disabled person himself or herself or to his or her family, including the right to secure and retain employment; or to engage in a useful productive and remunerative occupation.

That under Resolution 48/96, standard rules on the equalisation of opportunities for persons with disabilities were adopted by the UN General Assembly on the 20 December, 1993. In line with rule No 1 and No 2 prescribed therein, states should take action to raise awareness in society about persons with disabilities, their rights, their needs, and their potential contributions. Ignorance, neglect, superstition and fear are social factors that isolate them and delayed their development. Therefore, it should be ensured that rehabilitation services should reach and sustain their optimum level of independence and functioning.

Rule No 7 specifies that states should recognise the principle that persons with disabilities must be empowered to exercise their human rights and to have in particular — in both rural and urban areas — equal opportunities for productive and gainful employment in the labour market. No obstacle should be raised therein. Their integration into open employment could occur through a variety of measures, including vocational training, incentive-oriented quota schemes, and "reserved or designated employment", the court proceeded.

That the above rules proclaimed by the UN General Assembly are not compulsory but simply mirror political/moral obligations based on consensus inviting their practical application, and favouring adjustments to accommodate people with permanent or transitory disabilities, notwithstanding their physical, intellectual or sensory nature.

That in line with carefully planned measures, and within the guidelines drawn up by the explanatory note of Law No 39 (1975) on the rehabilitation of disabled persons, the challenged provisions were tailored with special emphasis on the need to mobilise human resources in all domains. Indeed, disabled persons should neither experience their deficiencies nor live with their implications. Defeating their causes and consequences by different means, including supportive assistance, and the establishment of equal rehabilitation opportunities, is required, along with preventive measures either in regard to the occurrence of impediments or in association with the permanent functional limitation which would result therefrom, the court reasoned.

That the determination under the challenged provisions of an employment quota for disabled persons is no more than a prescribed share designated and reserved in furtherance of their development, and in order to make feasible, effective and productive their adaptive contribution to empowerment. In fact those who are factually deprived of employment chances cannot be legally regarded as equal to others. Therefore the claim that the employment quota assigned to the disabled carries with it arbitrary discrimination is without merit.

Legally, classifications are inherent in legislations in that the legislator may select different persons or groups for different treatment. Classifications which would infringe on the equal protection clause are those that are rationally related to the attainment of a justifiable end, the court asserted.

Having this in view, legislative and socio-economic measures availed to the disabled in response to their needs and the necessities of their impediments particularise the effective treatment thereto, and establish — in so far as the designated share exclusively devoted to them is concerned — a meaningful relationship sustaining equal opportunities to all and therefore linking means with ends to negate arbitrariness, the court emphasised.

Claiming that disabled persons under the challenged provisions were employed in the respective departments or corporations against the will of their employers in violation of the freedom of contract, is groundless upon a two-fold consideration:

(1) The intention to do as one likes has no place in public law. Even under rules of private law, freedom of contract is a qualified and not an absolute right. Entering into contracts requires observance of rules of public order along with the specific formalities prescribed by law. In certain instances, the legislature intervenes to restore a failing economic balance in a contract.

(2) Freedom of contract is always limited to a circle within which there is no contradiction between the freedom of choice and the exigencies of fairness and public interest.

The challenged provisions paid due attention to equal opportunities in the labour market, and entrusted their accordance to the disabled persons in view of their impediments, the court admitted.

The argument that the prescribed employment quota for disabled persons affects the national growth of income is also irrelevant, the court continued. On the contrary, only through appropriate instrumentalities, including the concentration of human resources, may planned development be comprehensively realised. Indeed, employment is not a concession to be arbitrarily withheld or accorded, but the manifestation of a dignified personality, a recognition of basic human moral values; an affirmation of the bearing of responsibility; and in general a vehicle for a better life. Disabled persons should not be considered accountable for their infirmities. Nor may pension be acknowledged as a substitute for their employment and self-reliance, the court pointed out.

Disabled persons should not be treated as a class inferior to others. Nor should their equal opportunities be denied. Therefore a legislative consideration to penalise employers impeding access of the disabled persons to their prescribed job quotas shall not be in default of the constitution, and constitutes intolerable conduct from a social perspective, the court maintained.

Under the challenged provision, the court concluded, the denial of opportunities in the labour market to disabled persons constitutes a crime without prejudice to their right to the salaries they would have earned, had their access thereto not been barred. The imposition of criminal sanctions in addition to compensation is no indication that employers have been twice convicted for the same crime.

## Regionalism without hegemony

At the conclusion of a three-day conference on regional cooperation, Foreign Minister Amr Moussa warned that regional cooperation would be rejected if it was designed to impose the hegemony of one state — Israel — over the region

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In addition to Middle Easternism, the conference debated two other forms of cooperation — pan-Arabism and Mediterraneanism.

According to Moussa, Pan-Arabism is a question of identity. "It is a matter of existence. We, as Arab states, are the majority in this region, our role is central and we are not going to give it up or work on weakening it, but rather make it stronger."

He raised the question of whether a conflict is bound to develop between Middle Easternism and pan-Arabism or, in other words, whether Middle Easternism would be bound to undermine Arab identity.

Middle Easternism, he argued, would include the Arab states and three non-Arab countries — Turkey, Iran and Israel. "And if we move southward, the Horn of Africa will have to be included because we have historical ties with those countries."

Middle Easternism should be established on

an Arab base, Moussa said. To do otherwise would be to give it a completely different meaning. To be acceptable, Middle Easternism would have certain preconditions and prerequisites, "the most important of which are a just and effective peace process, the establishment of a Palestinian state, an Israeli withdrawal from all occupied lands and a final settlement for Jerusalem."

And, Moussa stressed, "the pan-Arab national project" would be at the core of any scheme for Middle Eastern cooperation. A strong Arab economy is important in order to "face the coming challenges."

Mediterraneanism was equally important but, Moussa said, in his view it does not represent an alternative to pan-Arabism or Middle Easternism.

The Arabs were not happy with the current status of the peace process, Moussa said. "To have a successful and effective peace process, it should be an Arab-Israeli process and not

just an Israeli process," he explained. "Peace should be reached without putting pressure on one party in the interest of the other party, because a peace like that will never last."

The Arabs were not ready to talk about security or political groupings imposed on the region by states outside it, Moussa added.

Asked whether the appointment of Madeleine Albright as the new US secretary of state would have an impact on the peace process, Moussa said: "We expect the US will continue to play its role as an honest broker in the peace process."

He also ruled out the possibility of another Arab-Israeli war, declaring that "we have to think peace and talk peace. We have to look for better ways to co-exist in this region, without clashes and conflicts. It is true that Israeli policy damages the peace process but it is our responsibility to put it on the right track like we did with the previous Likud government [of Menachem Begin]."

Moussa dismissed as "nonsense" reports that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had complained that the Egyptian foreign minister made "aggressive" statements. "We see the peace process as deteriorating as a result of a political mistake made by the other party," he said.

According to Mahmoud Abaza of the Wafd Party, "it takes two" to make peace, but, in this case, only one side is genuinely committed to it. "The Arabs want peace because part of their land is occupied, but Israel does not, although it pretends otherwise, because Israel's survival depends on the extinction of the other side," he said.

Unlike the other opposition figures who believed that a comprehensive settlement was "the only way out of this impasse," Hussein argued that Egypt should prepare for war.

"The Israelis have taken a decision to put themselves on a war footing, and we should be prepared for it," Hussein said. "Today it is Syria, tomorrow it will be our turn. Every time [Israeli Prime Minister] Netanyahu opens his mouth, he utters words of war, aggression and arrogance."

El-Said argued that the Arabs were responsible for Netanyahu's rise to power through their support of Hamas, a theory strongly disputed by Ashour and Abaza, who insisted that Netanyahu's policies were a reflection of the feelings of the Israeli people. "It is not true that Netanyahu does not express what the majority of Israelis want," Ashour said. "He exposed Israel's true intentions: that it is here to stay, that it will not allow any other power to become its military rival and that it will never allow the establishment of a Palestinian state."

El-Said and Hussein both questioned the effectiveness of a European role in peace-making. "There are differences between the US and the European Union on how to salvage the peace process," said El-Said, "but Europe will not promote a settlement that is in our favour simply because it is neither willing nor ready to become involved in a battle with the United States for our sake."

## Debating Israel's 'true intentions'

As the controversy surrounding new schemes for regional cooperation continued, opposition figures taking part in the conference categorically rejected any arrangement that would reserve the centre stage for Israel. They also said that participation in specific projects should hinge on a comprehensive peace settlement for all countries in the region.

One of them went so far as to warn that an Israeli aggression on Syria was in the pipeline, and urged the Egyptian government to "prepare for the impending war."

The majority passed the government's foreign policy, declaring it, for the first time in many years, it reflected the sentiments of the Egyptian man in the street.

"We now see many ordinary Egyptians showing an interest in foreign policy, which used to be something reserved for the elite," said Rifkat El-Said of the leftist Takaamul Party.

It was the government's effort to put the brakes on the normalisation process with Israel which earned the particular praise of most speakers. However, other aspects of foreign policy came under fire from representatives of the Islamist-oriented Labour Party and the Nasserist Party.

Adel Hussein, Labour's secretary-general, criticised the government for its failure to improve relations with Sudan, Iran and Iraq. "Our deteriorating relations with Sudan is a grave mistake on the part of the Foreign Ministry," Hussein said. "They should not have been allowed to deteriorate to this extent. They have become a thorn in our side. We should consider that we are dealing with Sudan as a state, and not Sudan as an ideology."

The same, he said, applies to Iran. "We cannot continue to ignore Iran's political clout in the region and, again, we have to deal with the state and not the ideology."

Surprisingly, Hussein was backed by Mustafa El-Fiqi, the Egyptian ambassador to Austria, who maintained that there were "certain powers which want to make sure that our relations with these two countries go down the drain."

While the majority of delegates argued that participation in regional cooperation projects should await the achievement of a comprehensive peace, some appeared to reject cooperation altogether. According to Saïch Ashour of the Nasserist Party, Middle Easternism is an American-Israeli plan, in which those two nations "are drawing up the roles which we have to play."

In Hussein's view, Middle Easternism was a political, rather than economic, plan to isolate Egypt. Egypt should be a key policy-maker in the region, he said, "but our role has been confined to bringing forward Arab clients. As soon as they sign agreements with Israel, Egypt's role becomes marginalised."

Ashour traced the erosion of Egypt's regional role to the 1978 Camp David peace agreements with Israel. "When Israel attacks Lebanon, we issue a condemnation, and when Israel attacks Syria, we stand with our arms folded because we are committed to a fragile treaty with the aggressor."

Hussein and Ashour underlined the need for the emergence of a powerful and united Arab bloc in an age which has seen the emergence of several economic and political groupings. Nas-

Despite their ideological differences, opposition figures were in agreement that regional cooperation schemes should await the achievement of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East

serian, Ashour said, "was the first attempt to achieve this goal," but the "legacy of Anwar El-Sadat undermined Egypt's ability to oppose American plans for the region."

El-Said blasted some Arab countries for their failure to promote Arab-Israeli cooperation. "But these two countries go down the drain," he said. "They rushed to normalise relations with it. It was as if, for Israel, was the point of attraction without which no project would be feasible," he said.

Ashour also lamented the fragmentation of the Arab world. "Israel insists on dealing with the Arab states separately," he said. "Yasser Arafat was dragged into signing an agreement with Israel, and the United Nations was prohibited from playing an effective role in the peace process. It has become an American process. The Middle East/North Africa [MENA III] conference should have put pressure on Israel, but what happened is that the US put the pressure on us," Ashour said.

The opening of the Madrid peace conference, which initiated the current peace process five years ago, was coupled with a series of events designed to weaken the Arab states, Ashour argued. They included the destruction of the Iraqi military arsenal — the number one threat to Israel — the embargo on Libya and Sudan and heavy American pressure on Syria to open negotiations with Israel. "It was all planned by America and Israel. We are not talking about a conspiracy but simply stating facts," Ashour said.

El-Said also argued that the Arab world was not in a position to achieve this goal, but the "legacy of Anwar El-Sadat undermined Egypt's ability to oppose American plans for the region."

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## Pragmatism with conditions

Many political experts taking part in the conference accepted that plans for regional cooperation had been tailored in advance to "pre-processed targets," but they nevertheless advised that Egypt should not boycott these schemes. However, they told the conference that as long as the peace process remained deadlocked, prospects for cooperation between Israel and the Arabs seemed distant, and should remain so.

Sounding a more pragmatic note than the representatives of the opposition political parties, the experts argued that the region had no option but to revive the peace process and embark on political and economic cooperation. But several of them warned against what they called Israel's ambition to impose hegemony on the region.

According to Hassan Abu-Taleb, intellectuals can be divided into three categories as far as their thinking on Middle Easternism is concerned: those who reject Middle Easternism, those who accept it and those who favour a pragmatic approach. "Some have rejected it flatly because they view it as an American scheme with Zionist roots aimed to bury the Arab identity and culture," he said. "They believe that the Arabs are not going to reap any benefits from cooperating with Israel since it is not a producer of technology but depends completely on the US and Europe."

Those who welcome Middle Easternism believe that both pan-Arabism and Zionism have been on the decline, Abu-Taleb said. They argue that Middle Easternism will turn the region into a major political-economic bloc at a time when other rival groups are emerging. They also discount allegations of Israeli aims of economic or cultural hegemony as untrue, he said.

The third category — the pragmatists — base their views on what cooperation would mean in terms of practical losses or gains, continued Abu-Taleb. This group believes that the economic boycott of Israel should not be terminated until a comprehensive peace is reached. They also believe that an Arab consensus should be reached before making any deals with Israel and that a consistent Arab policy should be pursued.

Abdel-Moneim Said said that the Arab world, now standing at a political crossroads,

Many political experts advocated a pragmatic approach and did not object to some form of regional cooperation involving governments as well as private entrepreneurs

needs a regional framework within which it can establish relations of cooperation with other countries, regardless of historical conflicts or cultural differences.

Said said the Arabs would be following a double-standard if they accepted to make peace agreements with Israel but rejected the projects that came as a natural consequence of the peace agreements.

The speakers made it clear that what they were talking about was not the grandiose dream of former Prime Minister Shimon Peres. "The Middle East market which was proposed by Shimon Peres no longer exists in the minds of the advocates, nor the opponents, of Middle Easternism," said Abdel-Shafie Elissa of Cairo University's Political Studies Centre. "Middle Easternism is no longer the unconditional integration of Israel into the Arab body or a call for a common Arab-Israeli market. The concept has become one of an Arab-Israeli partnership backed by input from the Western world and the multi-national companies — a partnership in which the private sector plays a key role alongside governments."

What Peres had in mind, according to Mohamed Sid-Ahmed, was an "impossible Middle Easternism," but what is now being proposed is a "possible one" — a Middle Easternism based on economic normalisation between the Arabs and Israelis, but which is not necessarily linked to a profound change in Israel's headline position on a political settlement.

Nadia Mnstafa of the Centre for Political Research and Studies struck a more negative note on current concepts of Middle Easternism. Talk of Middle Easternism today was far-fetched, she said, given the current situation in the region. "Inside Israel itself, the Likud vision of Middle Easternism is completely different from the Labour Party's," she argued.

While some delegates, including Taha Ab-

del-Alim, believe that Middle Easternism was not in fact intended to change the cultural and social identity of the region, but was genuinely focused on economic cooperation, others, like Mohamed Sid-Ahmed and Hassan Nafia,

argued that, in its simplest form, Middle Easternism is a machinery and, not an ideology, intended to strip the region of its Arab identity and give it a geographic label instead. "It is simply a machinery to integrate Israel into the region," argued Counsellor Tarek El-Bishri.

Similar arguments were raised when the conference discussed a variation on regional cooperation, Mediterraneanism, cooperation between the whole Mediterranean region. Such cooperation, some delegates maintained, would be bound to generate a clash between two civilisations — Islamic and Judeo-Christian — which are different in history, language and religion. It was, some experts argued, also meant to push Mediterranean Arab countries to join that geographical bloc, thus fragmenting the Arab world, leaving no space for the Arab identity and no room for Arab countries that do not overlook the Mediterranean Sea, such as Sudan, Yemen and Iraq.

Viewing regional cooperation from a historical perspective, many delegates saw Middle Easternism as the latest stage in Israel's attempts to secure hegemony over the region. Mohamed El-Sayed said argued that the currently projected regional cooperation cannot be seen as a by-product of global changes or the new world order, but rather as a continuation of attempts to "smother" the rival scheme of Arab nationalism, which reached its zenith with General Abdel-Nasser.

To leftist experts, Middle Easternism is a natural extension of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 — when Britain promised the Jews a homeland in Palestine — and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. "It is the final stage in building up Israel, an Israel that dominates the region," said Saad Abu Amoud,

a professor of political science.

As a result, economic dealings with Israel can never be "strictly business." "Such schemes of integration cannot be understood in purely economic terms since they are part and parcel of regional power politics," argued Mohamed Sid-Ahmed. "Any dealings with Israel have political undertones. The aim is to impose the Zionist ideology and infiltrate Arab societies to undermine their resistance."

Mustafa Elwan, another professor of political science, put it more bluntly. "Israel, with the assistance of the United States, is making an unrelenting effort to impose its hegemony on the region," he said.

According to Mohamed El-Sayed Said, the origins of the concept of Middle Easternism can be traced back to the 1950s, when the United States proposed a regional defence pact against the Soviet threat. But Middle Easternism was presented for the first time as a form of regional cooperation and a means of peaceful coexistence in an article which UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali published in *Al-Taliya* magazine in 1974.

Gouda Abdel-Khalak listed the more recent factors behind the emergence of Middle Easternism: the end of the Cold War, the Palestinian Intifada "which led the Israelis to think of new ways of deterrence" and the second Gulf War "which led to the Madrid peace conference."

"It is meant to rewrite the political history of the region, fragment the Arab world and force Arab states to join different economic, defensive and political groups," Abdel-Khalak said.

However Abdel-Moneim Said took the view that the idea of Middle Easternism should not be rejected on purely historical grounds. "Rejecting the idea of Middle Easternism just because of the deeply-rooted legacy of conflict with the Israelis would do the Arabs an injustice," he said. "It amounts to a negative definition of the Arabs, viewing them merely in relation to Israel, whether as enemies or allies."

Edited by Wadie Kirolos



## CompuMart 96

ON FRIDAY 13 December, CompuMart 96 will open at 1.00pm and last from 10am to 10pm everyday until Sunday. Some 35 companies will be displaying their hardware, software, accessories and services.

A public product presentation will take place on Saturday and Sunday. IDC international monitors will give a presentation on their products from a statistical perspective.

Last year some 6 thousand visitors attended the 3-day exhibition, which is organised by Concord/Sherin El-Rayes. This is their 30th public exhibition since 1989.

## Banking business rebound

MONEY and Business will devote much of its space this week to shed light on national and joint venture banks, and their achievements in 1996. This is a tradition which will be repeated in the forthcoming years.

It is worth noting that the financial status of most Egyptian banks witnessed great rebound that the assets of national banks totalled LE145 billion, representing 55.8 per cent of the total assets of all banks operating in Egypt.

As for joint venture banks' assets, they totalled LE63 billion, while assets of investment banks rose to LE37.3 billion. Deposits amounted to LE174 billion while deposits in foreign currencies amounted to LE15 billion. Loans provided amounted to LE129 billion in comparison to LE107 billion in the previous year. Joint ventures alone contribute LE9.9 billion from the total volume of loans. Projects approved numbered 1315 with total capitals of LE9940 million with a 60 per cent increase over the previous year.

The situation promises further prosperity for the banking industry in the forthcoming years.

Mohamed Youssef Habib

## Financial status reaches LE261 billion

THE FINANCIAL position of exchange organisations realised a total of LE261.1 billion as of June 1996, a 10.3 per cent increase of LE24.4 billion over the previous year. This increase is due partly to the financial status of commercial banks, which increased by LE18.9 billion, investment and business banks by LE3.4 billion and private banks with LE2.1 billion.

The annual report of the Central Bank of Egypt indicates that banks were able to attract new revenues to increase deposits by LE18.3 billion, over LE17.3 billion from the previous year. A large portion of these deposits were due to investment and business banks, as well as private banks.

The report indicated that banks increased their credit extended by LE22.2 billion to reach LE128.8 billion, as opposed to LE18.4 billion raise from last year, making up 49.3 per cent of total assets and 73.8 per cent of total deposits as of June 1996.

Commercial banks share the largest portion of this at 77.2 per cent, while investment and business banks have a 13 per cent share and private banks 9.8 per cent.

Banks' investment in treasury bonds and the stock exchange increased by LE3.1 billion, an increase of 0.8 per

cent to reach a total portfolio value of LE41.5 billion, representing 15.9 per cent of the total financial status as of June 1996. Of this figure, 59.1 per cent is made up of treasury bonds, 24.2 per cent in government shares and 16.7 per cent in individual companies.

Banks have boosted their ownership by LE1.1 billion over last year's LE0.9 billion to reach LE12 billion, representing 4.6 per cent of banks' total assets. Financial allocations increased by LE2.1 billion making banks' total revenues LE29.9 billion representing 11.4 per cent of the total financial status as of June 1996.

As for the performance of the banking sector, the report indicated that the financial status of the Central Bank of Egypt showed a recession of LE2.1 million, a decrease by 1.6 per cent, to reach LE129.8 billion as of June 1996.

Likewise, the financial status of the bank increased its foreign assets by LE1.8 billion. The report mentioned that during the past year, a great increase has taken place in the bank's investment portfolios, which includes investments from foreign governments, rather than reliance only on the cash flow from foreign banks and correspondents.

Exported currency has increased by LE2.6 billion, or 10.9 per cent, to reach LE26.1 billion, representing 20.1 per cent of the total financial status for the Central Bank as of June 1996.

Of the investments of the Central Bank, the insurance sector has increased by LE10.7 billion during fiscal year 1994/1995, as opposed to LE9.3 billion from the previous year. These investments have reached LE83.2 billion as of June 1996, with LE70.7 billion in the National Organisation of Social Security.

As for developments in the foreign exchange market, the market's revenues were reported to be \$20.4 billion during 1995/1996, with an increase of 14.8 per cent. Meanwhile, the use of these revenues was reported to be \$20.5 with a growth rate of 16.6 per cent for the previous fiscal year.

The Central Bank has been regularly buying and selling foreign currency according to the market's need. The Central Bank used \$3.9 billion while international reserves without short-term obligations reached \$18.5 billion, with an exchange rate of 339.3 piastres per US dollar as of June 1996.

Examination of credit reserves shows that they gained in local currency, with

the private sector making up 63.8 per cent of the credit given during the past fiscal year. The sector's debts increased by LE10.6 billion to equal 43 per cent of the total credit facilities reached at the end of June 1996. Credit facilities were likewise granted to the business sector with an increase of LE2.5 billion to reach a total of LE24.2 billion. As a result, the business sector, both

public and private, accounted for 67.7 per cent of all credit extended by the bank in local currency as of June 1996. As for the government sector, its percentage of debt only made up 17.2 per cent to equal LE17.2 billion, an increase over the previous fiscal year by 10.4 per cent.

As for credit reserves issued in foreign currencies, the private business sector received LE21.4 bil-

## TV programmes on the Internet

SAFWAT El-Sherif, minister of information, stated that the Egyptian mass media must maintain its identity among foreign cultures. He added that TV and radio programmes about Egypt will be placed on the Internet for public access next May. Sharif explained that through this, Egypt will be embarking on the path to the 21st century by employing the most modern means of communication and technology to teach the world more about Egypt.

Sherif's remarks came at the opening of a 3-day conference on mass media and the 21st century, held in Cairo.

## National Investment Bank

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## National Investment Bank offers bonds

Founded under law 119/1980, the National Investment Bank directs its activities towards financing projects of the national economic and social development programme, mobilising national and foreign assets for the sake of increasing economic growth through increased production, reducing the national deficit and increasing international trust in the Egyptian economy.

The bank provides financing for projects under the investment plan, an activity that it has done since its inception in fiscal year 1980/1981. Financing for these projects has reached, as of 1996, LE79.4 billion. Credit loans for economic housing and land reclamation reached LE40.5 billion. The bank also shares in financing new community projects in Sinai, the Red Sea and the New Valley, as well as infrastructure projects including sewerage, electricity and transportation. The bank has also participated in projects such as the new Metro line; irrigation projects at Danabara Asne and Naga' Hamadi and major bridge projects at Beni Suef and El-Minya.

The bank has also established and renovated schools and universities, and builds nearly 1500 schools per year.

The bank has also engaged in a number of joint projects within the country and in other Arab countries. The capitals of such projects total over LE11.2 billion, with the bank's share being LE0.8 billion. Among the most important of these projects are:

- The Alexandria National Company for Iron and Steel.
- The Egyptian-Iran Company for Spinning and Weaving.
- Al-Salihya for Investment and Development.
- A project for producing electrical transformers.
- A project for producing printing paper.
- A project for producing steel.

The bank also has capital in a number of joint venture banks, among them are the Arab Investment Bank, Bank of Commerce and Development, Bank Mohandes, National Development Bank and the Alexandria Commercial Maritime Bank.

The bank also holds shares in a number of important production projects in Arab countries, among which include the Arab Investment Co in Saudi Arabia, the Arab Investment Guarantee Organisation in Kuwait, the Arab Company for the Development of

Livestock in Syria, the Egyptian-Jordanian Company for Investment and Development in Jordan and the Arab Organisation for Investment and Agricultural Development in Khartoum.

The National Investment Bank, in an effort to boost its revenues, has issued bonds in US dollars in order to attract foreign investors and give Egyptians, living abroad, an opportunity to invest in Egypt. The bonds have been issued in compliance with Law 17/1986 which allows the National Investment Bank to issue them to the limit of \$500 million.

The bonds achieve annual returns which are taken into account every six months based on the price of the bank's loans on the London stock exchange. The bonds mature 10 years after the date of their issue. Through the decision of the bank's board, the bonds can mature 8 years after their issue.

The bonds can be bought through the Central Bank of Egypt as well as commercial banks and branches in denominations of \$25, \$100, \$1000 and \$10,000. Returns in these subscriptions are exempt from all taxes and fees, and can be sold at any time and refunded in US dollars.

## Crisis management conference

MOHAMED Rashad El-Hamlawi, director of the crisis management unit at the Faculty of Commerce, Ain Shams University, announced that a crisis management conference will be held which will deal with the crises that afflict organisations worldwide. The conference will review the efforts exerted by top brass in handling these crises. Decision-making, data networks and the media, in addition to other factors in managing crises, will be discussed.



Mohamed Rashad El-Hamlawi

## 26 companies established

THE COMPANIES Committee at the Ministry of Economy headed by Ahmed Fouad Ali, first undersecretary at the Ministry of Economy, approved the establishment of 26 companies, with an authorised capital of LE78,694 million. Among these companies,

19 are joint stock companies with an issued capital of LE73,350 million and LE429,300 million authorised capital. Seven companies are with limited liability. The new companies operate in the area of tourism, trade, industry, contracting and agriculture.



Royal Jelly:  
the genuine Chinese product  
now in Egypt



Liang Ruhua



Dr Mohamed Mursi

LIANG Ruhua, minister plenipotentiary of commercial and economic affairs at the Chinese Embassy in Cairo, says that Chinese-Egyptian relations have realised significant progress due to the increase of commercial exchange between the two countries.

In the Egyptian market, Royal Jelly syrup provides healthy results for all types of people, young and old, giving them renewed vitality and energy.

Dr Mohamed Mursi, agent for Panax Ginseng Royal Jelly in Egypt and the Middle East, added that Chinese rely on well-known herbs to give the body its nutritional needs, in addition to natural vitamins which assist in giving agility, strength and vigour which men constantly need. Bee pollen in the form of Royal Jelly is a unique source of nutrition which brings about healthy results with use, as proven in experiments with both healthy and sick people. There is also the addition of the Chinese herb ginseng, with its special properties which help the liver remove toxins from the body. Panax Ginseng Royal Jelly from China is the sole preparation having these unique characteristics.

## Medical expertise exchanged

AN AGREEMENT was signed between Cairo Scan and Cleveland Hospital in the United States. Attending the ceremony were Mr Mohamed Abdel-Wahab Mahmoud, Cairo Scan chairman, Heterm El-Gabell, general manager and managing director for investment affairs and Dr Michael Modic of the Cleveland Hospital.

According to the agreement, a second medical opinion can be given to patients examined in Cairo Scan or anywhere else. The agreement will result in the exchange of expertise and visits of doctors for 3 years. The two sides will also hold a wide range of conferences.

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Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt  
Figures of Bank Faisal  
as of 11 Nov. 1996

Figures in LE	As of 11/11/96	As of 27/8/96	Growth rate
Total assets	6556	6293	4.2%
Deposits	5039	4904	2.8%
Investment Balance	5925	5675	4.4%
Revenues	580	506	14.6%
Net Profits	166	142	16.9%

Profits distributed for depositors in the first half of 1996 totalled L.E. 145,1 million in comparison with L.E. 134,8 million in the same period last year.

The companies which the Bank established or in which it holds shares numbered 38 operating in various areas. The capital of the companies amount to L.E. 1122 million.

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# Whither GCC?

The 17th GCC summit which ended in Doha on Monday, increased fears that the 15-year-old organisation might face the same fate as other stalled Arab regional bodies, reports **Khaled Dawoud**

Bahrain's boycott of Doha's three-day summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) set a precedent, not only because it was the first time that one of the six members failed to attend such a high-level meeting, but also because it marked a new chapter in the nature of relations among the members of the organisation.

Since its establishment in 1981, GCC leaders have stated that one of their main goals was to present a united front representing the interests of the oil-rich Gulf states living in a volatile region and lying on top of 45 per cent of the world's oil reserves. International as well as strong US involvement in the region has also made the formation of such a grouping a necessity in order to appear as one strong bloc vis-à-vis militarily powerful neighbours such as Iran and Iraq.

However, shortly before opening the Doha summit on Saturday, the six Arab Gulf countries appeared divided as never before concerning several crucial issues: their relations with non-GCC neighbouring countries such as Iran, Iraq and Yemen; the means of solving bilateral border disputes amongst themselves; and future economic cooperation.

Bahrain's official media explained its decision to boycott the summit, despite last minute mediation efforts by Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other countries, as an expression of Bahrain's opposition to the way Qatar has been dealing with a territorial dispute over a cluster of Gulf islands. Backed by the Kuwaiti media, Bahraini officials have said that their absence highlights the fact that it is about time that members of the GCC speak openly about the organisation's failure to solve any of the bilateral disputes existing among its members. They also have accused the GCC of failing to consider equally the interests of all its members, seeking instead superficial united public stands while disputes were left to accumulate behind closed doors.

The GCC summit's final statement has even failed to make any mention of the dispute between Qatar and Bahrain, or to the dispute committee headed by Saudi Arabia and including the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, which Gulf officials said would try to solve the dispute between the two countries. Other senior officials said that a meeting of the Gulf's foreign ministers would be held in Saudi Arabia "in the coming few days" in an attempt to "clear the atmosphere between the two brotherly nations".

Shortly before the opening of the summit, Bahrain announced the arrest of two Qatari nationals who are allegedly agents of Qatar's intelligence services and put them on trial. Bahrain also carried out military exercises near Qatar while the summit was taking place and its prime minister, Sheikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, left on a private visit to Europe to avoid any Saudi pressure to take part in the meeting.

The news conference held by the GCC summit spokesman, Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al-Thani, to summarise the results of the meeting, confirmed that the five Gulf leaders who met in Doha had failed to reach an agreement on how to solve the dispute between the two countries. He did not only deny the spying charges brought against the two Qatari nationals, but also accused Bahrain's Crown Prince Hamad bin Eissa Al-Khalifa of personally plotting to overthrow Qatar's Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani. The Qatari foreign minister also accused Bahrain of bugging the rooms of the delegation his country sent to attend the previous GCC summit held in the Bahraini capital of Manama, in 1994.

The disputed islands represent nearly 30 per cent of Bahrain's overall territory. They have been under Manama's control since the 1950s, but a dispute over their ownership broke out in the late '80s after reports circulated that these islands might have oil reserves. Although both Bahrain and Qatar are known as poor in oil resources compared to other GCC members such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE, Qatar has large natural gas reserves. Qatar has taken its dispute with Bahrain to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, a move which angered Manama as it insists on keeping the dispute within the context of the GCC and Saudi mediation.

Quibbles regarding the Qatar-Bahrain dispute aside, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait managed to prevail on the other Gulf countries with regard to their stand against Iraq. The final statement of the summit included nothing new in this respect. It blamed the Iraqi regime for the sufferings of its people and for the tension in the region, while declaring the GCC's sympathy for the Iraqi people and support of the oil-for-food deal.

Before the opening of the summit, United Arab Emirates leader Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan initiated what seemed like a campaign towards a total lifting of the six-year-old sanctions against Iraq so long as it continues to comply with all Security Council resolutions. The UAE and officials of other Arab countries say that it is necessary to re-integrate Iraq into the Arab world in order to counterbalance the growing strength of Iran and also to restore tranquillity in the region. Outgoing US Defence Secretary William Perry got the message and his last mission during his tour of the Gulf region was to assure its leaders that the US would provide them with protection against both Iraqi and Iranian threats. The final summit statement has even pledged financial support to the UN committee monitoring Iraq's disarmament programme.

The statement came out with a stronger stand against Iran and in support of the UAE in its territorial dispute with Tehran over three Gulf islands. Despite the fact that the Iranian leadership addressed the GCC leaders before the opening of the summit and expressed readiness to sign a non-aggression pact, the final communiqué criticised Iran's military development programmes and its deployment of surface-to-surface missiles in the UAE-owned islands and the Gulf region. Such programmes "exceed conventional defence needs", and the GCC called upon Iran to refer its dispute with the UAE to international arbitration. Tehran has declared the three islands as part of its territory and

announced the establishment of a university on one of them, although there are no civilians settled there.

But the strongest language in the summit statement was that directed against Israel and the right-wing government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The GCC leaders confirmed their commitment to the resolutions of the Arab summit held in Cairo last June, linking any progress in normalisation measures between the GCC countries and Israel to progress in the peace process with the Palestinians, Syria and Lebanon.

The GCC leaders openly blamed Netanyahu for the current impasse in the peace process because of his attempts to renegotiate agreements already signed with the Palestinians and approved by the former Labour government of Prime Minister Shimon Peres. Oman and Qatar, the two Gulf states closest to establishing trade ties with Israel, have clearly stated that they have decided to freeze the normalisation process as long as the Arab parties remain dissatisfied with the outcome of peace talks with Israel.

Yemen's application to join the GCC was probably the most ironic event to take place at what was described by diplomats as a "boring" GCC summit. Until hours before he opened the summit, the GCC Secretary-General Abdullah Al-Hajjailan insisted that Yemen's demand would not be on the meeting's agenda. Yemeni officials, however, were already in Qatar presenting their application to the Qatari Emir as host of the summit. Yemen's minister of parliamentary affairs, Ahmed Ghannem, who stayed in Doha to follow up on the issue, even tried to force his way into the first closed session of the GCC leaders' meeting. He wanted to present his country's case and explain the reasons why it is seeking to join the oil-rich organisation. Even though security men prevented the Yemeni minister from entering the meeting, he accepted to leave only after an envoy of the secretary-general persuaded him that he would be summoned through his country's embassy if the GCC leaders decided they needed any information. Yemen, the poorest nation with the largest population in the Arabian peninsula, has difficult relations with most Gulf countries due to its support of Iraq during the 1990 Gulf War. Kuwait has said that Yemen cannot join the GCC because it has a different political system, namely republicanism, in contrast to the royal systems of the GCC countries. Saudi Arabia, involved in a territorial dispute with Yemen, has also pushed for the postponement of the issue. So, the issue was not even mentioned in the final statement.

Expectations that the Gulf leaders would follow the ongoing trend of seeking closer trade ties with their neighbours in the region were not fulfilled. Additionally, the notion of the necessity for the



Saddam Hussein opening the taps at an oil pumping station in Kirkuk (photo: AFP)

## "Victory for the poorest"

YESTERDAY, Iraqi oil started flowing through a pipeline to Turkey for the first time in six years. The Turkish regional director of the state-run Turkish pipeline firm Botas confirmed to AFP that Iraqi crude was received Wednesday through the pipeline ending in the Mediterranean port of Yumurtalik. On Tuesday morning, Saddam Hussein had opened the taps at an oil pumping station in Northern Iraq to start Iraqi crude flowing, but The AP reported two hours later that UN officials shut down the pipeline to wait for formal confirmation from the UN of the approval of oil contracts.

Under the food-for-oil deal with the UN, Iraq has been permitted to export 2 billion dollars worth of oil every six months, to pay for much needed food and medicine. Iraq had accepted the deal on 20 May, but implementation was delayed as a result of technical differences between Iraq and the United States on details of international supervision, fixing the selling price of the oil and Saddam's incursion into the protected Kurdish areas of Northern Iraq in August.

On Monday, UN Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali gave the green light for Baghdad to resume oil sales, announcing that the materialisation of the deal represents "a victory for the poorest of the poor in Iraq." UN agencies estimate that about 180,000 Iraqi children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition as a result of the sanctions imposed on Iraq.

Significantly, one third of the proceeds from this avowedly humanitarian plan will go towards defraying UN costs and paying for war reparations stemming from Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

Gulf countries to form an economic bloc to compete with similar ones on the international level did not seem to appeal much to the Gulf leaders. Officials at Doha's summit failed to reach agreement on unified custom tariffs, a long delayed step and the most important condition set by major world trade partners, such as the European Union, in order to sign a joint accord. Saudi Arabia, with cus-

tom tariffs as high as 20 per cent on some goods, clashed with the UAE which wanted to maintain its present level of four to six per cent. Gulf officials said two to three years were still needed before an agreement could be reached, while other participants in the meeting were frustrated because they expected that no agreement would ever be reached on the issue.

## Turning the screws

The only section of the interim agreements Netanyahu wants to implement is Hebron re-deployment. But should Arafat concede, he lets Netanyahu off the hook, writes **Graham Usher** from Jerusalem

On 7 December, a US official in Jerusalem admitted that the marathon Palestinian-Israeli talks on Hebron had run their course. "At this point, the negotiations are no longer fruitful," he said. "If there is common ground, the two leaders should resolve this."

Given the distrust that reigns between the two leaders, it is an open question if "common ground" exists any longer, whether on Hebron or the other 33 issues still pending from Oslo's interim agreement. On 10 December, the influential Israeli magazine, *The Jerusalem Report*, quoted a "government source" close to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as saying that even the Hebron re-deployment is no longer a sure thing. "The only way there's going to be a re-deployment from Hebron," he said, "is if the US turns the screws on Arafat." If the US refuses to do so, the source is clear about the consequences. "An explosion," he said.

Recent events suggest that US screws are being turned, though it is unclear whether on Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat or Netanyahu or both.

Over the weekend, the US coast-guard in Israel, Edward Abington, held three meetings with the PLO leader to get his approval for a three-page document summar-

ising "Palestinian" proposals to break the impasse on Hebron. Drafted by US special envoy Dennis Ross and Egypt's national security adviser Osama El-Bez, the document reportedly drops the Palestinian demand for "unrestricted use" of rifles in the 80 per cent of Hebron under Palestinian National Authority (PNA) control. In return, Israel has agreed to drop its demand for an explicit acknowledgment of the army's right of re-entry into Palestinian areas once the re-deployment is completed.

But the real snag in the document are likely to be Palestinian demands unrelated to the Hebron pull-out. The PNA is insisting, together with an agreement on Hebron, that Israel commits itself to honouring other interim issues such as the release of around 30 Palestinian women prisoners still interned in Israeli jails as well as a timetable for Israel's three further military re-deployments in the West Bank. The PNA also wants a set date for recommencing Oslo's final status talks on Jerusalem, settlements, refugees, borders and water resources in the West Bank.

Although in the past Netanyahu has pledged verbally to implement Oslo's interim agreement, it remains unclear what he means by this. Many Palestinians suspect that for the Israeli leader the interim agree-

ments mean the Hebron re-deployment and little else. Arafat wants the whole package, especially the further re-deployments, and is wary of any summit with Netanyahu that leaves the other interim issues unresolved. It is for this reason, say sources, that Arafat has yet to approve the US-drafted document. There are grounds for the PLO leader's suspicions.

At the weekly Israeli cabinet meeting on 6 December, Netanyahu said that the Hebron negotiations were "exhausted" and that, "in the coming weeks", his government would proceed to "discuss the pattern of the permanent settlement with the Palestinians". He made no mention of the other outstanding interim issues. This is probably because he wants to skip them.

In October, Netanyahu said before the Knesset that his government would like to move quickly to the final status issues because there was "a broad area of agreement among Israelis" on what a final settlement with the Palestinians should be. It would be a political arrangement in the West Bank and Gaza where the Palestinians are granted "maximum liberty" over their lives and Israel "maximum security" over the territories.

The content of this "liberty" was glimpsed in a series of "national objectives"

for Israel drawn up by one of Netanyahu's coalition partners. On 23 October, Knesset representative for Israel's Third Way (TW) party, Yehuda Harel, set down proposals which, he said, would form "a consensus acceptable to both the [Likud] government and [Labour] opposition." The TW should know, its three parliamentarians were formerly members of the Labour Party who, before the Israeli elections, formed a new bloc and joined the Likud coalition in protest over Labour's apparent readiness to withdraw from the Golan Heights in exchange for peace with Syria.

The TW's "national objectives" would surely command support across Israel's political spectrum. But they are utterly unacceptable to any Palestinian or Arab consensus. Harel's proposals rule out any future Palestinian sovereignty over "metropolitan Jerusalem", the Jordan Valley and major settlement clusters such as the West Bank and would prevent any future Palestinian polity controlling (Palestinian) immigration into its areas of jurisdiction. They are also, it appears, wholly in line with Netanyahu's thinking.

On 26 November, Netanyahu visited the Jewish settlement of Ariel — with 13,000 settlers, the second largest in the West Bank. He declared it was "the capital of Samaria" (i.e. the northern West Bank) and will be strengthened as a central layer in the framework of the permanent settlement with the Palestinians. Five days later, his office issued a statement designating the Jordan Valley, too, "an indispensable part of Israel in any permanent settlement in the region." Settler leaders from the Jordan Valley let it be known that Netanyahu had promised 700 new housing units for their settlements. Arafat's dilemma is, therefore,

acute. Over the last two months, he has successfully marshalled an international coalition behind the PNA to force Netanyahu into implementing the Hebron agreement, more or less as it was signed by the last Israeli government. He has now to decide whether to risk it by conditioning the Hebron deal on Israel's implementation of the rest of the interim agreement. If he accepts Hebron alone, he lets Netanyahu off the hook of international pressure. If Arafat insists on the interim agreement as a whole (and Netanyahu refuses), the Oslo process in effect will be at an end. At that point, the US screws may really be turned.

## When doves plead

Former Israeli minister and Meretz leader Yossi Sarid is the latest Israeli figure to visit Cairo in an attempt to release an Israeli spy held by Egyptian authorities. He spoke to **Khaled Dawoud** about that issue and shared his thoughts on the current state of the peace process

Yossi Sarid, Israel's former environment minister in the Labour government of Shimon Peres, is the leader of the leftist Meretz Party known for its support of the establishment of a Palestinian state. He was also actively involved in the nearly three years of arduous negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. He is a man who witnessed and took part in what he labels a "revolution" in Arab-Israeli relations. This revolution led to the creation of the Palestinian state which, he says, "has already been established." Yet, he is now out of power, together with the Labour government led by Peres. Their views on the "new Middle East" in which Israel is expected to play a key role are shelved, at least temporarily.

The "sweet" talk of Peres and his team has now been replaced by the right-wing ideological views of Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu and his extremist coalition partners. People such as Ariel Sharon and Yitzhak Mordechai consider the expansion of settlements in the West Bank, Gaza, and the Syrian Golan Heights a holy mission despite all warnings that this will derail the whole peace process.

Hoping that one day he will be able to make a comeback to power, Sarid justified that he was not in Cairo to criticise Netanyahu and called upon Egyptian and Arab officials to remain "restrained" in their criticism of Israel because one has to differentiate between a government and its people. "It is true that between a peace process is dying, the only alternative for the peace process, God forbid, is the war process," he said. "But my advice is that everybody should be restrained about declaring and expressing very aggressively the war option."

Sarid, who was described as a dove in Peres' government, agreed that Netanyahu cannot keep on making promises forever without taking action on the ground. He added that Netanyahu "was very inexperienced when elected as prime minister. I believe that he made very grave mistakes. And he does not admit his mistakes. But I am quite confident that he himself thinks that he could have done things differently. For example, opening the tunnel (in Jerusalem), I do not believe he would do the same mistake again."

Sarid added that reaching an agreement with the Palestinians on the redeployment of Israeli troops in the West Bank town of Hebron was the "first test" for Netanyahu because it would reveal his real intentions towards the peace process. "It is the most important not because Hebron is the most important issue, but because it became very much symbolic," he said. Sarid ruled out, however, that an agreement would be reached "in the coming few days" due to remaining differences between the two sides. "The next step, after Hebron, should be further redeployment."

The Meretz leader confirmed his strong opposition to Netanyahu's policy of expanding settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. He claims that there was nothing in the Oslo Accords between Israelis and Palestinians clearly imposing a total ban on the building of settlements, but admitted that it is the main obstacle to the peace process. He denied, however, Netanyahu's accusation that the former Labour government allowed the expansion of the settlements under the concept of "natural growth."

Sarid added, "The settlers have strongly complained

that the settlements have been put in a deep freeze by our government and their demand is to change this policy. There is a big difference between a government about which we have no doubt concerning its real intentions toward peace and a government which has not proved yet its commitment to the peace process."

He agreed that the Labour government "was not perfect", "but we made a revolution. The Palestinian state has been established already. This is a state. It is ridiculous to argue whether there will be a Palestinian state or not. This is a *fait accompli* now. The only discussion now is what will be the final borders of the Palestinian state."

Sarid believes, however, that Arab countries should continue to maintain strong links with the so-called "peace camp" inside Israel. "Cooperation with the peace camp in Israel is highly desirable and it is very important now," he added that it is important that all peace supporters maintain strong ties because, "if God forbid, hostilities resume, everybody will pay the price."

Sarid denied that the main purpose of his visit to Egypt was to convince officials to release Azam Azam, an Israeli national of Arab origin, who was arrested in Cairo in early November after being charged with spying for Mossad, Israel's intelligence service. He said that he did raise the issue with Foreign Minister Amir Mousa, "because I am convinced that he is not a spy and that there is a mistake in the matter." Egyptian authorities, however, told Sarid that the case will be referred to court and that a charge sheet has already been prepared.

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# Likudniks in the White House

No changes in US policy towards the Middle East are expected, despite this week's appointment of pro-Israeli secretaries of state and defence, reports **Lamis Andoni** from Washington

This week's change of guard in America's foreign affairs and national security teams is not expected to effect a substantial shift in United States policies towards the Middle East. However, the combination of an aggressive secretary of state and a staunch advocate of Israeli regional supremacy in the position of secretary of defence does not bode well for prospects of serious American pressure on the hard-line Israeli government.

The appointments of Madeleine Albright as secretary of state and William Cohen as secretary of defence are likely to place a damper on any hopes of a more even-handed policy in the Middle East in the second term of Bill Clinton's presidency.

"These appointments will most likely demonstrate that the carte blanche which Israel enjoyed under Clinton will not only continue, but be more unqualified in the second term than it was in the first — contrary to the widely held notions among Arab optimists that pressure on Israel will be easier now that Clinton does not have to contest any more elections," said professor and author Nasser Aruri, who has written extensively on American foreign policy.

American officials disagree, maintaining that the appointments will not affect the US role, since it remains "the only party trusted by both Israel and the moderate Arab governments." The officials do not foresee significant changes, especially since the main team that has been supervising the Middle East peace process — Ambassador Dennis Ross and his deputy Aaron Miller, who are believed to be closer to the Israeli Labour Party than the ruling Likud Party — is expected to remain in place.

However, the fact that both Albright, at the United Nations, and Cohen, in the Senate, have been outspoken in advocating an assertive American involvement in the region, based on strengthening the special Israeli-American alliance and isolating Iran and Iraq, could further strain relations between Washington and some of its Arab allies. Although Albright, a Democrat, and Cohen, a Republican, come from two different political traditions, they have individually campaigned against any policies and resolutions that might intimidate Israel, both in Washington and at the UN.

As the American ambassador to the UN, Albright provoked many Arab ambassadors by her un-diplomatic language, whether employed against Iraq or Iran or in her effortless campaign to block resolutions favourable to the Palestinians. Former Senator Cohen is known for his explicit support for Israeli claims to Palestinian land, including East Jerusalem, and vehement and vocal opposition to Palestinian rights and financial and military aid to Arab governments which fail to make peace with Israel.

As part of an American campaign over the past few years to prevent a re-affirmation of previous UN resolutions that recognise Palestinian national rights and Arab grievances, Albright shocked many Arab diplomats in September 1994 by sending an aggressive memo — widely perceived as derogatory — to the other UN delegates. The memo not only warned delegates against referring to UN

resolutions on Palestine during the annual ordinary session of the General Assembly, but described the resolutions as "contentious, irrelevant and obsolete."

Although Albright was mainly implementing her government's policy, which has opposed any UN resolutions that might alienate Israel, the un-diplomatic diplomat is said to have personally lobbied for an American veto of a Security Council resolution that was mildly critical of Israeli plans to expropriate land in Beit Hanina. While the State Department favoured an abstention, Albright, according to diplomats in Washington, convinced the US to block the rather timid resolution in 1995.

Albright saw that her pro-Israeli stands prompted the major Arab-American organisations to lobby against her nomination to the position of secretary of state, according to Arab-American leaders. The major Arab-American organisations had been hoping that former Democratic Senator George Mitchell, of Lebanese origin, would succeed Warren Christopher, even though Mitchell has always maintained a pro-Israeli stance in Congress. Albright is viewed by many Arab-American leaders as

significantly closer than Mitchell to the Israeli and American Jewish right.

Albright's pivotal scathing campaign against UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali was interpreted by many foreign diplomats at the UN and in Washington as meaning that she is resentful of any criticism of American policies and the view that American will should be respected by the UN. "Civil servants should not forget who pays their salaries," she once said, in reference to Ghali's criticism of American policies. Cohen, the only Republican so far in the American cabinet, has a consistent record of supporting, co-sponsoring and co-signing Congressional resolutions in favour of Israeli claims. In his 16 years in the Senate, Cohen has lobbied actively for financial and military support to Israel and has co-signed several petitions and letters to move the American Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

In 1994, Cohen dispatched a letter to President Clinton, urging him to veto any UN resolution that "states or implies" that Jerusalem "is an occupied territory." He has consistently maintained support for Israel's claim to Jerusalem as its "unified and

eternal capital." Cohen has always advocated linking American military and financial aid to Arab governments to their readiness to end the boycott of Israel. He has written letters to Saudi and Kuwaiti leaders urging them to normalise relations with Israel and has a record of opposing arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

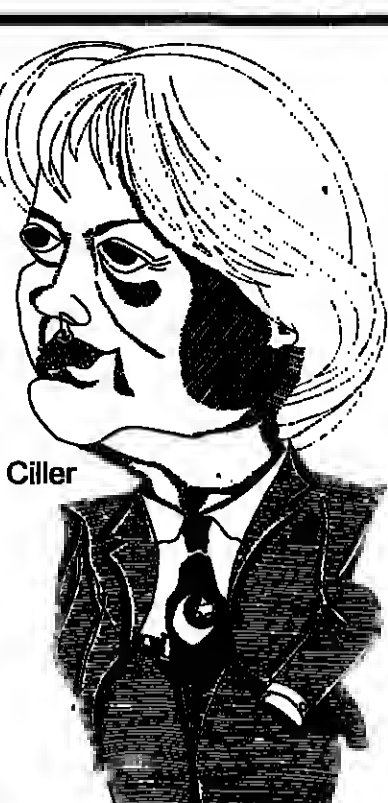
On the domestic front, on the other hand, Cohen is considered "a moderate Republican," especially on economic and civil rights issues, making him, in the view of analysts, a perfect bridge between a Democratic administration and a Republican Congress.

The nominations of Cohen and Albright have not been seen by observers as a clear indication of the course that US foreign policy will take. But there seems to be an agreement by analysts in Washington that the appointments indicate that President Clinton needed a strong team that included members from both parties, to resist a growing isolationist trend among American conservatives and to appease a right-wing Congress.

Support from right-wing Senator Jesse Helms, an ardent supporter of Israeli Likud policies, for the

newly designated secretaries, confirms that Clinton's decision was mainly aimed at pre-empting Congressional opposition to his cabinet. Albright, with her aggressive style in promoting American policies, and Cohen, with his commitment to the Republicans' foreign policy agenda, are expected to formulate and implement the unified American foreign policy of a government seemingly divided on most domestic issues.

Perhaps the question to be asked is how far US foreign policy, in style and substance, will be subject to domestic considerations that dictate an appeasement of the right-wing Congress. Administration officials insist that the US policy in the Middle East will be characterised by "continuity" — a word that does not necessarily send the right signal to those in the Arab world who have been anticipating American pressure on Israel. Yet if Clinton, by making the recent nominations, aimed to find some common ground with conservative Republicans, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu can now feel able to count on new allies in Washington — which will further jeopardise an already faltering peace process.



## Africa goes frenglish

In Africa, France has fallen from grace and Americans are picking up the pieces, writes **Gamal Nkrumah**

I'm always made to feel adolescent at this time of the year, when forced to admit that I haven't really been following cultural developments closely enough. I am told that a new radio station devoted to gangster rap is all the rage in Ghana today. Politically correct music like hip-hop, rap and reggae are out of fashion. Needless to say, youngsters had no time to spare for the parliamentary and presidential elections that took place this week in Ghana. There are those who see these developments as signs of detrimental American influence. "Cultural imperialism," thundered Akbar Muhammad, international representative of the Nation of Islam and its leader Minister Louis Farrakhan.

Muhammad has long been a resident of Accra, the Ghanaian capital, and travels extensively across the continent. He organises youth camps in Africa for African Americans. "Five fantastic days in Egypt, 23 unbelievable days in Ghana," reads one of his flyers. The youngsters visit the old slave forts that pepper Ghana's Atlantic coast, from where their ancestors were shipped to America, drop in at the Du Bois Centre for Pan-African Culture in Accra, check out the ancient temples of Luxor and get to see the Pyramids.

France has some two million African immigrants. Over 13 per cent of the 260 million-strong population of the United States are of African descent. At least two of Africa's America's finest writers, James Baldwin and Richard Wright, left America and made France their home. Two Francophones, Senegal's Youssouf N'Dour and Zaire's Papa Wemba, walked away with the much coveted All Africa Music Awards trophies during an unprecedented bilingual — French and English — musical festival staged in Johannesburg, South Africa, earlier this year. Anglophone contenders like the host nation's Yvonne Chaka-chaka, Nigeria's King Sunny Ade and Zimbabwe's Bantu Boys lost out. Critics complained that the event aped America's Grammy music awards and Hollywood Oscars.

France displays a never-say-die spirit in the face of American inroads into hitherto exclusively French domains — political, economic and cultural. But few serious observers of the African scene doubt that France's efforts to continue its paternalistic handling of Francophone African affairs are anything but foolhardy. France is concerned about American cultural inroads in Africa. France also complains that US satellite pictures support the Rwandan government's statements that most of its nationals have returned home from the refugee camps in eastern Zaire.

What accounts for the amazing advances of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila? Disgust with the deplorable economic and social conditions, gross human rights violations and political oppression under the regime of Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seku, which is today backed by France — and

has been supported by the US in the past. In Africa, especially after the French defeats in the Great Lakes region, France has truly fallen from grace. Last Thursday, Burkina Faso's President Blaise Compaoré opened the 19th Franco-African summit at the headquarters of the West African Economic and Monetary Union in Ouagadougou. Compaoré kicked off the conference with a meeting of Francophone African leaders about the future of their currency, the CFA franc, which is linked to the French franc. Francophone Africa fears for the future of the CFA franc and the union following the adoption of a single European currency in 1991. They are beginning to eye the US dollar and might explore the possibility of coming to an arrangement with Washington. Paris is not amused. For America all is bright, for France all is bleak. Still, judging from the headlines, few in France took note of what was happening in Ouagadougou. French public opinion was more concerned with calamities closer to home — the Paris metro bombing.

The official theme of the Ouagadougou conference was "good government and development," according to Egypt's assistant foreign minister for African affairs, Marwan Badr, who represented Egypt at the Francophone summit. "The main issues on the agenda were ethnic conflict and political instability in Francophone Africa. The issue of lifting economic sanctions against Burundi was also discussed. Tensions in the Great Lakes region, including the fighting in eastern Zaire, and choosing other African candidates to replace Boutros Ghali as United Nations secretary-general were also high on the agenda," Badr told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. France warned that it would veto the appointment of any candidate who does not speak French.

Ambassador Magdi Hefni, assistant minister for African affairs, travelled to the capital of Burkina Faso a week before the Francophone summit and represented Egypt at a meeting of the Washington-based Global Coalition for Africa — a brainchild of African-American civil rights leader Reverend Jesse Jackson. Hefni told the *Weekly*, "The Cairo Agenda for Action for relaunching Africa's economic and social development established a consensus that Africa's development is first and foremost the responsibility of our governments and peoples." Both France and America are pressing African states to adopt "good governance" as a prerequisite for development.

French military blunders and diplomatic ineptitude in Africa contrast sharply with America's growing clout. In 1996, both US officials and unauthorised Americans of the Farakhan variety have left an indelible mark on the way the continent is heading — both culturally and politically. One cannot say the same for French President Jacques Chirac and Jacques Foccart — a man they call the "witch doctor" because he has concocted France's Africa policy over the last three decades.

America has its own problems in Africa. Farrakhan, to Washington's chagrin, received the red carpet treatment in many an African capital. Why? Because despite all America's admonishments about good governance, Africans appreciate how the Nation of Islam cleared the streets of US inner city ghettos of narcotics and crime and provided jobs for young African Americans. Moreover, the US is withholding some \$1 billion of its contribution to the 10th replenishment of the funds of the International Development Association (IDA). Africa is the major recipient of money from the IDA, through which the World Bank makes subsidised loans and grants to the world's poorest nations. There is also talk in the Republican-led US Congress of doing away with USAID, the agency that handles official American aid projects. America is no longer a major aid donor. That doesn't go down well in Africa.

How America treats its own citizens of African descent also troubles Africans. In 1983 African Americans constituted 4.8 per cent of all US foreign service employees. In 1996, the figure is fractionally higher at 5.2 per cent. More to the point, there are fewer senior African American foreign service officers today than there were 13 years ago — 142 in 1996 compared to 160 in 1983. Small wonder Farrakhan and his men receive red carpet welcomes throughout Africa and in the Third World. Not until 1961 did an African American foreign service officer win an ambassadorship. Since then, 31 more African American career diplomats have become US ambassadors — mainly to African nations. Other African Americans have accepted ambassadorships as political appointees; they also served mainly in Africa. Only two African American ambassadors have served in Western nations and only one each in Asia and the Middle East.

Francophone leaders are turning away from things French. Mali's celebrated President Alpha Oumar Konaré, who has become something of a cult figure in African development and human rights circles, personifies this trend. He was educated at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies. "I intend to visit our aid mission [in Mali]," said outgoing US Secretary of State Warren Christopher before his African tour a couple of months ago. Mali has the largest Peace Corps endeavour in Africa. "Mali was frankly chosen [by Christopher] in recognition of the tremendous progress made in some of the most difficult conditions in all of Africa. The triumph of democracy there, I think, is especially praiseworthy because of the economic conditions they face and the problems they faced with the tribes in the north," Christopher explained. He was referring to the quelling of the Tuareg separatist rebellion supported by Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi — an African leader who both Paris and Washington have serious misgivings about.

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# Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

In three successive issues, between 20 to 23 December 1992, *Al-Ahram* devoted most of its front page and a portion of its second page to a series on "The Science of Medicine and its Origins." It was one of the most delightful series featured by the newspaper.

The first instalment opened with a definition of medicine. This science, it said, had its origins among the ancient peoples of China, India, Babylon and Assyria and particularly among the Ancient Egyptians. In this context, it cited Herodotus' observation that Egyptians "are the healthiest people and the most prudent in matters of health. They had medical books which describe assorted cures dating from the age of the Pharaoh Khufu. They were copied under the 12th Dynasty and they were circulated among physicians."

The second instalment was dedicated to medicine among the Ancient Greeks. Here it cited Hippocrates, after whom was named the famous oath taken by those who have received a degree in medicine. This celebrated physician "collected and compiled the knowledge of his age and added to it the knowledge he acquired through precise observation. So prolific was his work that he was called the "father of medicine". He said the illnesses are conveyed through the medium of food and the air and that their origins must be sought in water, the air, the home and the seasons of the year.

The third instalment treated medicine in the Arab world. The Arabs, it said, "initiated a new renaissance in the study of medicine. They gleaned what they could of the fragments of Greek writings that came down to them, expanded on this knowledge through research and examination and excelled in the arts of diagnosis, description and classification."

*Al-Ahram* featured this series on the occasion of the medical conference that was held in Cairo at that time, the first international gathering hosted by the Egyptian capital in modern history. It was not an ordinary conference-by any standards.

The origins of this conference date to over a year earlier when, on 30 June 1991, the Khedive Abbas II met with senior physicians who proposed to him the idea of "holding a medical conference in the Egyptian capital in the winter of 1992, in order to discuss the causes and symptoms of endemic diseases and methods of prevention and then to publish the proceedings of the conference. His Royal Highness demonstrated great enthusiasm for the project and promised the physicians that he would personally sponsor it." *Al-Ahram* added that it learned that the conference would comprise of three sections: one on internal medicine, a second on surgery and a third on ophthalmology.

On 3 July 1991, *Al-Ahram* supplied further details on the forthcoming conference. Given that the committee in charge of the conference had begun preparations shortly after the meeting with the khedive, one notes the presence of that vital element of planning necessary for the success of such international conventions. More than a year in advance, the date and venue of the conference had been set. It would be held from 10-15 December 1992 in the School of Medicine. The planners also decided to create a committee consisting of 55 physicians, "each of whom will pay LE5, and every Egyptian physician who attends the conference will

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In December 1992, Cairo hosted the first international conference in its modern history. It was a medical gathering to discuss endemic diseases in Egypt and other hot-climate areas and methods of prevention. Besides more than 300 physicians, some 180 doctors from Europe and the US attended. By dint of careful advance planning, the conference was a great success despite a controversy among Egyptian doctors over preparations. **Dr Yuman Labib Rizk** tells the story, based on *Al-Ahram's* extensive coverage.



pay a fee of LE1." At the official level, "all nations will be invited to send delegates," and on a personal level, "invitations will be dispatched to all skillful practitioners." The programme would be to discuss diseases endemic in Egypt "and then to discuss the science of medicine among the Arabs, for Arab medicine has a substantial history and considerable benefits to impart."

The committee also devoted much attention to the necessary practical arrangements for transport and accommodation. It arranged with various shipping companies to have the foreign participants brought to Egypt at half the usual cost. *Al-Ahram* took the opportunity to urge the Egyptian Railways Authority to offer free transport to all the conference participants, "the native Egyptian physicians or foreigners, because Egypt needs this conference."

The newspaper was certain that the government would "lend considerable financial assistance to aid this conference, because we have learned that all the officials who were notified of it welcomed the news with great enthusiasm." As preparations advanced, the conference appeared to take on the characteristics of a major international event. Participants who were scheduled to deliver papers, referred to by *Al-Ahram* as "reports," were expected to send them in to the conference organisers before 15 October 1992. Each speaker would be given a maximum of half an hour to present his paper. The official languages were restricted in French and Arabic, although it would be permitted for a speaker to deliver his presentation in German, English, Greek or Italian on the condition that he submitted a synopsis in French. Egyptian participants were required to have "obtained an official licence to practise medicine in Egypt."

With preparations on such a promising course, it would not have occurred to anyone that the conference might be "a subject of envy and fractiousness,"

as *Al-Ahram* put it. One of the newspapers, perhaps *Al-Mugattam*, began to open its pages to protest. As *Al-Ahram* comments, "First one doctor began, then they became two, then gradually others became aware and added their voices. Each claimed a cause for objection, though his colleagues might be unaware of such a cause. The only factor they had in common was protest for the sake of protest. One contingent complained that they should have been elected chairman, another that their opinions were not heeded, a third that the conference was not being organised through the proper channels because such conferences should essentially be the function of scientific societies and state academies."

*Al-Ahram* deplored such protests and asserted that they would not hamper the conference. "It will be successful, God willing. Even if only Egyptian physicians participate that will be sufficient for us and for our government."

The organising committee added its voice to that of *Al-Ahram* in replying to the protesters. It rested its case on several facts. Firstly, the organisers argued, the participants who are invited to attend such conferences in Europe "are not scientific academies or medical associations, for whatever status such institutions enjoy, they do not have an official capacity in such cases. This is because doctors are engaged in a free profession and they do not have a boss they have to obey." Secondly, the committee argued that its connection with the government does not give it an official capacity and that the government's assistance "does not exceed the contributions which the government bestows on all activities in the country that may encourage the advancement of science and benefit the human community."

The committee stressed that it had included among its 53 members 32 doctors from the Egyptian Medical Association, all of whom were members of the association's board of directors. As a result, it concluded, there should be no grounds for complaints or grievances, and urged concord and harmony. The demonstrating doctors remained unconvinced. To them, the committee's answer reeked of bias, and they entrusted Dr Shibli Shumail with responding on their behalf. Dr Shumail published a lengthy article in *Al-Mugattam* in which he attempted to refute the arguments laid out in the communiqué issued by the committee and signed by its chairman, Abasi Pasha.

For several days, *Al-Ahram* maintained silence on this issue. Eventually, however, it felt that it had no alternative but to break this silence when it perceived that "the voices of the doctors reached its highest pitch" and some of the most "fervid men of learning" had joined the ranks of the protesters. The solution it proposed was to maintain the original composition of the committee but to revoke the decisions it had taken. Then the medical society would hold a plenary session in which the members would "deliberate the rules and conditions for participating in the conference, the agenda and other procedural aspects."

Having proposed this compromise, the newspaper announced that it would no longer publish items pertaining to individuals involved in the dispute. "However, if the matter should involve the ways of reaching consensus over the conference and ensuring its success, *Al-Ahram's* arms

are open." As one follows the newspaper over the summer of 1991 one learns that *Al-Ahram's* hopes of resolving the issue were shattered. Once again, it found itself in the position of having to embroil itself in the debate, although it had resolved that the article it published in its 17 July edition would be "our word of truth and the end of the argument."

Under the headline "Protest over the medical conference", Daoud Barakat, one of the rising stars at *Al-Ahram* at the time, had his tongue firmly planted in his cheek when he wrote, "This protest is like a disease-bearing microbe. Either it is conveyed by a carrier to all quarters of the city or it is airborne, propelled in space from the heads of the protesters to other people's heads. Some have voiced objections because they fear that if they do not get a seat in the conference they might lose their clients; others complain that they were not invited even though they are doctors; yet others insist that they know more about Egyptian diseases than all the conference men put together." The author held that the first sort — those afraid of losing their clients — were the most sincere. Despite the protests, Barakat concluded that the conference would not founder. "The government now has a stake in its success. It has vested its money and the highest officials have given it their backing and promised more support. The government, therefore, will pay little heed to objections."

It was not until Abasi Pasha tendered his resignation from the chairmanship of the organising committee and was replaced by Ibrahim Hasan Pasha that the protests subsided. *Al-Ahram* congratulated Abasi Pasha for his altruism, which it considered "clear proof of his desire to ensure the success of the conference which is in the best interests of the nation. It is to be hoped that this will provide sufficient inspiration to the protesters to relent in their squabbling and to devote their energies to the success of the conference and the welfare of the people." This time, *Al-Ahram's* prayers were answered. Contentment subsided and the organisers set about dispatching invitations abroad and finalising preparations.

During the few weeks preceding the conference, the date for which had been shifted to 19 December 1992, final touches were added to the programme. It was decided that on 23 December, at the conclusion of the conference, the Council of Ministers would hold a reception for all the participants. It was also decided that the Alexandrian doctors would form a reception committee to greet the delegations arriving from Europe and "to take them on a tour of the hospitals and on an outing in Kom Al-Shuqafa." Meanwhile, the organising committee in Cairo made other arrangements for entertaining the foreign guests. Plans included a cruise on the Nile to the barrage at Al-Qanater Al-Khayriya, a trip to the Pyramids, a visit to the zoo at Giza and a ball at Abdin Palace.

On 1 December, the conference's secretariat committee took up offices in the Hotel Continental in order to greet and register participants. The first contingent would be the Italians, followed by the Germans and Austrians, Russians, Romanians and the participants from Israel and Greece. *Al-Ahram* begged its readers permission to allocate a special section of its front page to this conference. After all, its readers knew "from the moment the government began to lend its support to this conference and the moment that some newspapers moved to resist it, that we considered this opposition a form of hostility against Egypt, for the gathering of 500 scientists under Egypt's skies offers the greatest testimony to how much it merits this blessing. Egypt is working alongside Europe for the advancement of science."

On Friday morning 18 December, the Royal Opera House opened its doors to the inaugural ceremonies. What could be more apt than following these events first-hand along with *Al-Ahram's* correspondent on the scene, Daoud Barakat? The participants, Barakat writes, began arriving at the Opera House at 9am. By 5pm it had filled with a host of eminent men of science, including 12 Germans, two Americans, 13 Britons, 32 Austrians, three Belgians, 23 Frenchmen, 17 Italians, 15 Russians, eight Swiss and one Spaniard. After 5pm there were more arrivals, until the number of foreign doctors attending the ceremonies reached 180.

In addition to Lord and Lady Cromer and Prince Mohamed, the brother of the khedive, Barakat also noted numerous "eminent ladies of status" gracing the box seats. He was also struck by the fact that the participants occupied the stage while the representatives of the press were seated in the orchestra pit. At 10 o'clock the khedive arrived and delivered a short opening address in French. He expressed his gratitude to the many foreign scientists who had undertaken the arduous voyage in order to attend the conference, the purpose of which was to discuss diseases endemic to hot climates. Egypt, he said, was the ideal location for such a conference "in view of its climate and its geographical location which makes it the link between the Occident and the Orient."

Following the khedive, the chairman of the conference, Ibrahim Hasan Pasha, delivered a welcoming address in Arabic. He reminded his audience that the conference was being held in the land of the pharaohs, known for their advancement in the sciences and the world of medicine.

At the end of the conference it was decided to hold another one five years later, also in Cairo.

The author is a professor of history and head of *Al-Ahram* History Studies Centre.



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## Al-Ahram Weekly

### AIPAC's shadows

The nominations of Madeleine Albright as secretary of state and William Cohen as head of the Department of Defence have caused a good deal of anxiety throughout the Arab world. Perhaps, justifiably so. Neither Albright nor Cohen have made a mystery of their Israeli sympathies. And, neither of the two has left a doubt in anyone's mind that the Arabs, notably the Palestinians, are low on their list of priorities.

Their biases, however, beg the question of whether the US will play a leading role in the conclusion of a just and comprehensive peace in the region. It is Clinton, not anyone in his Cabinet, who is responsible for the outlining of US domestic and foreign policy objectives. In part, therefore, the future of regional peace hinges on how well Clinton can balance the promises he made to the regional players with those proffered to a Republican-led Congress and the American electorate.

Albright's responsibilities as head of the State Department would, in effect, be an expansion of her duties as the US's ambassador to the UN. But instead of being Christopher's hatchet-woman, she would — or rather should — be Clinton's. But can the re-elected president successfully stand firm against a Congress that has every inclination to be as Israeli as the Knesset, even after the recent ruling on the status of the right wing American Zionist organisation, AIPAC?

Past experience, as evidenced by Clinton's first term in office, indicates that rather than stand firm on his convictions, he has played the happy-go-lucky moderate, seeking, as often as possible, to please as many people he could.

Similarly, Clinton has yet been unable to prove that he has the mettle to impart to Netanyahu the logical benefits to be realised from concluding a peace settlement that takes into account the consideration, needs and rights of all parties involved. He is, basically, unwilling to do more than offer the most embarrassed frown, thrown in the direction of the Israeli premier. Albright and Cohen, noted for their Zionist sympathies and less-than-subtle approach to diplomacy, are perhaps the least likely members of Clinton's Cabinet to initiate a reversal of this trend.

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# The lessons of a decade

In the eighties the Arab world was plunged into a seemingly endless recession. Now, though, the region looks set for economic take-off.

**Ibrahim Nafie**  
examines the lessons to be learned from the past 15 years



the eighties, the real value of deposits depreciated.

This is not to imply that all Arab investments abroad were a failure. However, such investments did not realise the potential that sounder investment policies would have achieved. Of course, any proper evaluation of the Gulf countries' investment policies must take into account the political circumstances then prevailing in the Gulf.

The eruption of the Iran-Iraq War at the end of 1980 forced the Gulf countries to spend vast amounts of money on security, absorbing much of the accumulated oil revenues. Then, hardly had the first Gulf War ended in 1988, than the region was again plunged into turmoil following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

If the eighties was a difficult decade for the oil rich Gulf, it was worse still for non-oil producing Arab nations, most of which faced rocketing foreign debts and plummeting rates of growth. Unemployment reached unprecedented levels and deficits in national budgets and in trade balances spiralled out of control. The eighties, the "lost

decade" with regard to development in the Third World, was also a time of economic catastrophe for the Arab world.

Of course, it would be grossly simplistic to assert that the eighties was negative in all respects. The rich Gulf countries saw enormous progress in terms of infrastructure development, as well as in the diversification of their economies.

Nor should we forget that these countries furnished billions of dollars in aid to the poorer Arab countries and contributed to the alleviation of unemployment by providing millions of job opportunities for Arab labourers.

In turn, the billions of dollars of remittances from Arab workers in the Gulf contributed to the economies of the poorer countries which had suffered a dearth of foreign exchange. The influx of foreign currency from abroad, whether in the form of aid, loans or remittances, enabled these countries to upgrade their infrastructures. This said, the actual economic development achieved on both the regional and national levels was far less than the ambitions generated and the opportunities made available

by the adjustment in oil prices that had followed the October War.

In conclusion, the political climate of the eighties was far from conducive to joint Arab action. The rapid changes that beset individual Arab countries and the general course of regional and international developments diminished the possibility of mass expenditure on development projects. Nevertheless, every cloud has a silver lining and there are several important lessons to be learned from the experience of the eighties:

Development, whether at the national or pan-Arab level, is not built on available capital alone. Economic under-development is not a function of capital scarcity alone. Such a view overlooks the importance of the quantity and quality of available human resources, the availability of managerial and organisational skills and the necessity of investment in new technology.

A second important lesson is that sound economic development can never grow from erratic crisis management. It is essential to devise economic policies capable of acting as a buffer and withstanding the inevitable crises. Economic progress can only be built on balanced attempts to remedy budgetary deficits in both rich and poor Arab countries, something that has, by and large, already been achieved. Equally, the enhanced competitive capacity of Arab productive sectors, within both domestic and international markets, has also placed the region on a much better footing. The rehabilitation of the private sector in many Arab countries also bodes well for the future.

There remains, however, the most important lesson of all. No single Arab country will be able to effectively contribute to efforts geared towards Arab economic integration unless it first understands the benefits that it will reap from this process. Economic integration is predicated upon a very different, and far more complex concept, than that governing philanthropic aid and solidarity among Arab nations, however desirable that is.

## Edward Said on talking to Israelis

Invoking Edward Said's latest contribution to the debate over the role of intellectuals (Al-Ahram Weekly, no 302), Mohamed Sid-Ahmed reiterates the need for an alternative Arab strategy

It is clear from Edward Said's article in *Al-Hayat* of 4 December, entitled: "Which Israel should we talk to?" (published in last week's issue of *Al-Ahram Weekly* under the title "Knocking on the wrong door"), that the author is not opposed in principle to engaging in dialogue with Israelis, especially in the absence of a credible military option. What he is opposed to is that the Labour Party should be considered a potential partner for peace, for, in his opinion, Netanyahu's policies are an intransigent, ugly extension of Labour Party policies.

That this assessment is not in contradiction with mine is borne out by the article I wrote in *Al-Wasat* on 11 November, in which I pointed out that "in calling for Netanyahu's isolation, I was not proposing his replacement by Peres... whose era has gone never to return. Nor should it return. For Peres' vision of peace remained, in essence, a project to subordinate the Arabs to Israel's will. Worse, his indecisiveness contributed to Netanyahu's victory. When I proposed an Arab strategy aimed at isolating Netanyahu, I meant a strategy aimed at cultivating alternative currents in Israeli society, whose credibility as peace forces would be determined by their favourable response to the legitimate Arab demands."

According to Edward Said, those forces are more likely to be found among "the Jews from Arab countries who remain oppressed within the largely Ashkenazi-dominated Israeli system..." as well as among "independent intellectuals, artists, university students and professors, whose social positions and intellectual vocations permit a much greater degree of receptivity to and tolerance of the idea of Palestinian national rights and independence." He does not exclude, a priori, all members and sympathisers of Israel's Labour Party. This, too, is an assessment that does not differ substantially from mine, though I would express the reservation that many Jews from Arab countries like, for instance, Netanyahu's foreign minister, David Levy, can turn out to be particularly hawkish.

To my mind, the importance of Edward Said's article lies in that it has removed a weapon from the hands of those who claimed he shared their views with regard to the boycott question, and who invoked his status and credibility to lend credence to their call for the total boycott of all Israelis. Their

claim has been refuted by Said's article, and they can no longer use his name to deepen the rift in Arab ranks between those who call for a dialogue with the present Israeli government and those who call for the boycott of all Israelis.

According to a news item in the same issue of *Al-Hayat* in which Said's article appeared, a popular Egyptian delegation made up of representatives from the Tagammu, the Nasserist, Labour, Wafd and Liberal parties, from the Muslim Brothers and the Communists, from committees opposing normalisation of relations with Israel, from trade unions, as well as artists, writers, and journalists, is in Yemen to take part in an all-Arab conference aimed at normalisation. And so the lines of battle are drawn, pitting Arab against Arab instead of displacing the battle to Israel. The dangers of this sharp polarisation in Arab ranks must be pre-empted at all cost.

Here the Arabs are faced with two tasks, one procedural, one substantive. On the procedural level, inter-Arab dialogue must take precedence over any other. And, to be constructive, it must be built on complete transparency. I was once asked by an audience violently opposed to the normalisation of relations with Israel whether I would be prepared to go to Israel. I replied that I could not commit myself to not going whatever the conditions. But I added, "I can commit myself to never going on my own, without a collective decision by forces who enjoy credibility and whom I respect, including people with whom I now differ on this matter completely. Of course, we would have to define just who those forces are and what 'credibility' means in this context." In other words, my frame of reference is the Arab counterpart of the forces mentioned by Edward Said as acceptable interlocutors in Israel, i.e. forces for whom the cause of peace takes precedence over narrow interest and motivation.

On substance, I believe the inter-Arab debate should be focused not on boycott or normalisation, or even on whether the boycott should be total or selective but, rather, on coming up with a clear definition of what peace means in the specific conditions of the Arab-Israeli conflict. More precisely, can "peace" for the Arabs become something more than mere tactics dictated by a currently unfavourable balance of power? Do they have a concrete picture of what peace should entail as a strategic option? Then, what is meant by "land" as used in the land-for-peace formula forming the cornerstone of the entire peace process? Is it the land lying within the borders established in the 1947 UN partition plan, within the post-'48 war boundaries, within the pre-'67 war boundaries or within the wider borders which resulted from Israel's withdrawal from "territories" and not from "the territories" it occupied in '67? And what are the modalities of "peace"? Are we talking about a simple armistice like the one that prevailed after '48, or a "peace" without diplomatic relations as before '67, or with full normalisation, as now required?

I do not think the very notion of "peace" is acceptable from an Arab vantage point as long as Israel has not convinced the Arab parties, by deeds and not by words, that its presence in the Middle East can be more advantageous to them than its absence. But how to reconcile this assumption with the Zionist project which places the interests of the Jewish people above anything else? For this contradiction to be overcome, Israel's presence in the region must be seen to contribute to the promotion of factors of "abundance" in place of the present factors of "scarcity" widespread throughout the region. Indeed, any intruder in an environment of "scarcity" is bound to be perceived as an aggressor, and will continue to be so perceived even if it agrees to sign contractual peace agreements.

In previous writings on how to break this vicious circle, I proposed that a scientific/technological breakthrough on desalinating sea-water could make water come to symbolise "abundance", exactly as "desert" throughout the Middle East now stands as a symbol of "scarcity", of land unexploited by man. But land in the Middle East has a spiritual and not only a material value. No solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict is conceivable without Israel's restitution of occupied Arab land, without a Palestinian state with its capital in Jerusalem, without relations built on mutual confidence, not on mutual threat, without the de-nuclearisation of the entire region.

The situation has become so critical that everything should be tested, including thinking the unthinkable. Are the Arabs up to the challenge?

Successful development presupposes two basic conditions — domestic stability and regional peace. We should be grateful, therefore, that in terms of domestic stability Egypt has achieved much, as witnessed by the unprecedented level of attendance at the latest MENA economic conference revealing the international business community's confidence in Egypt's political stability.

This contrasts sharply with the second precondition, regional stability. The fallout from the stalled peace process is already making itself felt, not least in Israel where statistics reveal a steady decline in foreign investments, since Netanyahu came to power. Unfortunately, though, the negative effects of Netanyahu's obstructionist policies vis-a-vis the peace process will not be limited to Israel alone but pose a threat to the economic future of the entire region.

To secure the economic future of the peoples of the region we must first secure a comprehensive peace. But is such a peace possible when the present Israeli government refuses to implement already agreed upon commitments? International pressure, which is mounting steadily — the MENA III conference was a indication of this mood, as is the increasing criticism of Israel in the Western media — should go some way towards convincing Netanyahu to change his attitude towards peace. But more important still is pressure from within Israel itself. Increasing numbers of Israelis are openly voicing their opposition to Netanyahu's policies. As their voices grow louder, we must hope that they pressure their government into effecting the desired change.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmany.

### The Press This Week

**Al-Gomhuria:** "We must admit that the Qatamiya and Nasr City building catastrophes can only be described as corruption in the true sense of the word! What has mollified the people's anger is that the government uncovered this corruption, confronted it and attempted to impose solutions after demands that it should speedily intervene and take decisive measures against all those responsible for such horrible actions." (Samir Ragab, 5 December)

**Al-Ahali:** "The question is definitely bigger than just one faulty building or ten or a hundred. It is basically one of squandering public money on cardboard buildings, an action which calls for decisive measures. But the government is evading this on the pretext that this phenomenon exists worldwide and that it had uncovered the crime. Yet it is forgetting or overlooking the fact that its methods are to blame for what happened and what is likely to occur again so long as corruption is one of the important institutions of the state." (Lufti Waked, 4 December)

**Al-Wafd:** "The Qatamiya catastrophe has shocked all Egyptians. They are saying: If that is the state of buildings erected by the government, how can we blame those who erect buildings which collapse on their tenants? The bitter truth is that Egyptians now have no faith in what is built by the government because there is no supervision or follow-up." (Editorial, 8 December)

**Al-Ahram:** "The erection of all these buildings in violation of specifications is a big disaster in which the public and private sectors along with state agencies are involved. It means a loss of faith in what is happening around us. The matter requires speedy action by the government to set up a fact-finding committee to uncover the truth. Amongst those structures, the largest of all is the one called 'ethics' — it is true that the time has come to declare that it, too, has collapsed!" (Salah Montasser, 5 December)

**Al-Arab:** "The smell of corruption is nauseating. Wherever you turn you find it. There is corruption in the administration and people have lost their integrity. Millions multiply like breeding rabbits and the policy of 'grab and run' is prevalent. The government declares that it is confronting corruption and upholding the rule of law but it does so from a distance and does not consider itself responsible for what is happening. The Minister of Cul-

ture does not consider himself responsible for museum thieves and the Housing Minister for collapsing buildings. Everyone talks as if they were innocent. If all our ministers are that alien, where on earth does all this corruption come from?" (Editorial, 9 December)

**Al-Akhabar:** "I hope that the Qatamiya buildings catastrophe will not be used as a pretext to settle old scores and unjustly involve honest men who work for Egypt's good. I hope that outsiders will not set themselves up as prosecutors and judges and issue unjust rulings not serving public interest. I call upon everyone not to interfere in the process of law and the investigating bodies — doing so would be to undermine the authority of the judiciary and violate human rights." (Galal Dawidar, 6 December)

**Al-Mussawwar:** "It was not enough for Netanyahu to seek to undermine the accords Israel signed with the PNA, or to continue building settlements, or to oppress the Palestinians and threaten to reoccupy their lands, or to threaten to wage war against Syria and Lebanon, or to speed up plans to Judaise Jerusalem and even Hebron. Now he has decided to conspire against the Arab governments by turning Europe against them on the grounds that they are undemocratic and do not respect human rights. As though human rights, particularly Arab, are respected in Israel, where Palestinians' blood is shed daily, their homes are demolished, their lands are confiscated and they are even denied the right to pray in Al-Aqsa Mosque!" (Abdel-Qader Shohreib, 6 December)

**Al-Ahram:** "Now we find an extremist government in Israel which kills women and children and violates all international resolutions. It fills the Occupied Territories with Jewish settlements inhabited by armed killers. It pursues a fait accompli policy which means that there is nothing to negotiate, while all we Arabs do is issue statements of condemnation. And the US, which talks a lot about democracy, considers Israel to be the only democratic state in the region. It stands against the whole world in its support for Israel, considering itself the guardian of a militarist Nazi state, which violates all laws and is ruled by an extremist terrorist leadership whose chief aim is expansion and hegemony and undermining peace." (Ihsan Bakr, 8 December)

Compiled by Hala Saqr



BAH...  
one line



The eyebrows of Madeleine Albright, US secretary of state-designate, are raised aggressively rather than questioning, to reveal eyes whose expression might best be described as ambivalent. The lips, held in a pout, rounded cheeks and a meticulously constructed hairstyle do not succeed in softening the harshness of her features.



## Close up

Salama A. Salama

### A realistic role for Europe

Since Miguel Martiros, European Union envoy to the Middle East and Spain's ex-ambassador to Israel, arrived in Egypt at the beginning of his Middle East tour, the direction of European initiatives in the Middle East have become a little clearer.

Following regional visits by the French president and other high-ranking European officials, and in view of the passivity displayed by the US in the face of Netanyahu's failure to honour Israel's commitments, the European Union has increasingly been attempting to define a role for itself and to identify the perimeters within which it might operate without entering into confrontations with Washington or unnecessarily provoking Israel.

Given the frustration felt by Arabs at Netanyahu's continuing intransigence, more and more hopes have come to be pinned on the potential role of the European Union in getting the peace process back on track.

European initiatives have certainly been motivated by a recognition of the disastrous consequences that would ensue should the peace process prove to have been stalled permanently. Europe fears the possibly destabilising effects of such an eventuality north of the Mediterranean, and has also become increasingly resentful that it has been sidelined into financing the process without having any say in its direction. The US, monopolising its position as principal partner in the process, has left Europe with no other role than to finance infrastructure development projects, bankroll self rule elections, and generally pick up most of the bills incurred since the conclusion of agreements in Oslo and Cairo.

The dispatch of a European envoy to the Middle East is clearly intended to revive Europe's role in the region. In an attempt to change the perception that Washington holds all the cards in this particular game, Europe is increasingly focusing on the details of the peace process. But wary of Israeli hostility to any European role in the negotiations — a hostility which the US shares — Europe is attempting to position itself in a complementary role rather than supplementing the US.

Any clear-cut definition of a European role will stand on its ability to agree to a unified foreign policy. Europe has a long history of Arab-European dialogue but unfortunately statements issued by the European Union about the Middle East have generally comprised little more than empty rhetoric.

Any enhanced European role naturally begs a number of questions. When does the European Union stand on the building of Jewish settlements, on attempts to alter the demographic map of Jerusalem or on the violation of human rights by the Israelis? Will the European Union be able, openly and clearly, to condemn those parties responsible for bringing the peace process to a halt?

Arab countries, on the whole, have welcomed a stronger European role in the region, and some of them have allowed wishful thinking to get the better of them. The Europeans themselves, however, are well aware of the limits of the role they can play, a recognition reflected in the task which the envoy has defined for himself.

Restoring credibility to the peace process must begin in Israel, among the ranks of its political parties, political groups and the intellectual elite. Europe's role in the region has, in the past, been shown to be more illusion than reality. This said, Europe's new envoy should not lose heart. But nor should he underestimate the difficulties that are involved in promoting a fair and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, one that will guarantee the stability of all the region rather than simply serving the ends of Jewish pressure groups and enhancing Israeli influence.

Gomaha



## Quicksand in our eyes

Projects for regional cooperation are merely cover-ups for the fundamental causes of regional instability, writes Gamil Matar

A number of projects for the future of the Middle East have been put forward in the past few months, showing the extent of European and US concern about the progressive deterioration of the regional situation. Most of the ideas put forward, however, reveal that Europe is either aware of its inability to influence the policies of the US and Israel, or will once more attempt to manipulate the Arabs and tailor their future — one more project in the Western empire. Britain, in particular, may adopt the methods to which it usually resorts when concluding international treaties or establishing regional organisations directed and manipulated from Western capitals.

The Cairo round of the MENA conference did not exactly achieve what many — including Shimon Peres — had envisioned, and it is entirely possible that an attempt to undermine the outcome may yet be made. It is commonly assumed that multilateral committees, the offshoots of the Madrid conference, are already in place and functioning at full throttle; in reality, they are totally or mostly inactive. Israel's intentions and policies sharply distinguish, first, between current individual settlement tracks and, second, between the settlement tracks and their legitimate source, namely the Madrid conference. These policies are the indirect cause of the multilateral committees' inactivity.

Fifty years of Arab-Israeli conflict have taught us that Israel is not at all concerned with security matters, but, rather, has a deep-seated phobia of international legal terms of reference, like UN resolutions or international agreements — including those agreements to which it is party. This phobia is both a cause and a result of Israel's political behaviour. The only term of reference which Israel has always staunchly adhered to is the *fait accompli*.

Programmes to expand NATO southwards are currently being envisaged. While NATO may have its own objectives, which are not directly linked to the Arab-Israeli conflict, it can safely be said that those who conceptualised this expansion were quite aware of the difficulties involved in reaching a peaceful settlement.

Europeans are concerned with developments linked to poverty or Islam. They are concerned with direct threats to the security of a NATO member, since such a threat could easily move northwards. Certain countries in southern Europe are worried about the expansion of NATO to the East, fearing that this may hinder expansion to the south. Plans to establish a rapid deployment force in the

Mediterranean region were announced suddenly. Yet I see no marked difference between plans to expand the organisation to the south, and the establishment of a rapid deployment force in the Mediterranean.

The difference, if any, remains one of form rather than substance. It is assumed that any southward expansion will ostensibly take place to protect the countries of the region against attacks by a "common enemy". In other words, NATO would not protect countries like Jordan and Lebanon against Israeli aggression. Israel is not an enemy of NATO, and is not likely to become one in the foreseeable future. On the other hand, a rapid deployment force would presumably aim to protect the security and interests of the region against any acts of violence which might take place along the southern coast of the Mediterranean. Theoretically speaking, this force could be used against an Arab state, or against groups protected or sponsored by that state, even if such groups are part of the state, its defense system or its political or security organs.

The Barcelona conference elicited positive responses from Arab statesmen and intellectuals. The warmth with which the conference was received contrasts with the response to other initiatives. The reason for this, I believe, lies in certain psychological factors related to the difficulty of dealing with Peres' project and with concepts related to Middle-Easternism which had sparked US and British enthusiasm. To the Arab political mind, the concept of the Middle East is linked to Western imperialism, or rather to the establishment of Western hegemony over the region; the Middle East project is closely associated with the West's useless vigilance in "protecting" Israel and its expansionist policies.

Yet despite the Arabs' profound scepticism with regard to Middle-Easternism, initiatives which aim at integrating the region along the very same lines it proposes do not arouse the same repulsion in the minds of Arab statesmen, and of certain intellectuals, as do cruder forms of this ideology. This is a strange phenomenon; nor is it more comprehensible if we attribute it to the failure to understand that "money" has come to replace a number of terms such as "justice" and "rights" and where "globalism" has replaced the "state", the "homeland", "community" and the "family". Those who promote "globalism", of course, are those who have dominated finance and politics in the world throughout the last centuries; in the less developed countries, they are also those who would derive a clear benefit from the creation of global systems.

Britain has launched a new initiative calling for the establishment of "a comprehensive and public entity to promote cooperation between all the states in the Middle East region, with the support and assistance of friends overseas such as Britain, France, the United States and others". This project was outlined by British Foreign Minister Malcolm Rifkind, in a speech he delivered in the United Arab Emirates. Perhaps the most astonishing — and inadmissible — omission of this speech was Rifkind's complete failure to mention Israel's policies in any way. He made very clear value judgments on Iraq and Iran, yet the speech did not once refer to Israel as the direct cause of the tensions in the Middle East.

The foreign minister affirmed that the peace process is the major challenge confronting the region, but his criticism was focused on Iraq and Iran: "If we let Saddam Hussein throw his weight around in one area, unchallenged, he will surely challenge elsewhere. We must also keep a careful watch on Iran, which professes a wish to play a constructive role in the interests of regional stability. The facts tell a different story." In other words, the British foreign minister did not see fit to mention that Israel challenges stability and security.

If the British truly wished to foster cooperation and security in the Middle East, bringing together Europeans, Israelis and Arabs, the foreign minister should have delivered a different speech (especially if we consider the fact that his audience was Arab) in a bid to build confidence within the region. The speech should have mentioned that Israel is responsible for crippling the settlement process, that its relations with its Palestinian neighbours are the major source of instability in the region, that the Arabs must not cooperate with Israel until it ceases to destabilise the region and threaten its neighbours, until it halts the building of new settlements and demolishes settlements already built in the West Bank and until it desists from attempting to impose a de facto Jewish domination of Jerusalem.

Instead, the British were urging the Arabs to emulate the example set by the European Organisation for Co-operation and Security and similar organisations, perhaps oblivious to the fact that Europe's experience may neither be repeated nor copied. Europe was not colonised by world powers; nor was a state established in its midst by force. European states which have succeeded in achieving cooperation and security are states with a long history of security and stability. In the Middle East, on the other

## Soapbox

### An end to isolation

The UN resolution, allowing Iraq to sell \$1 billion worth of oil every 90 days in order to provide for its basic humanitarian needs, is in fact fenced in with conditions, with large chunks of the annual proceeds being earmarked for compensation payments to both Kuwait and to the Kurds.

Under these arrangements the average per capita share of the proceeds of oil sales for the Kurds will be \$0.5 per day, almost twice as high as for Iraqis. A further sum will go to cover expenses incurred by the UN Special Commission and other UN sponsored operations in Iraq.

Despite the shortcomings of the resolution it was welcomed regionally and internationally, particularly by those who had argued that sanctions were hitting the Iraqi people and not the regime.

Iraq's resumption of oil production is expected to lead to a slight drop in oil prices, though this is likely to be only a temporary phenomenon. This, certainly, is a fact that needs emphasising, given attempts by certain US oil interests to fuel the differences between Arab oil producing countries by claiming that Iraq's production would affect their interests, when in fact experience shows that cooperation between Arab oil producers is the only sure-fire method of guaranteeing those interests.

The UN resolution has been warmly received by Arab public opinion, not only because it alleviates the suffering of the Iraqi people but because it presents a possibility for Iraq to return to the Arab fold. This isolation, inflicted on Iraq by the miscalculations of its regime and by the exploitation of those miscalculations by international forces, has lasted too long.

This week's Soapbox speaker is a social scientist and a senior journalist with Al-Gomhuria.



Fathi Abdel-Fattah

## In the footsteps of the tiger

What can the Arab world learn from South Korea's economic miracle? Heba Handoussa looks ahead

In today's jargon of development economics, South Korea's growth strategy is the perfect example of a "human resource oriented strategy". It is a strategy which combines those elements that promote the acquisition of basic needs and an equitable distribution of income among all individuals in the society, that provides a balanced structure of economic growth based on the accumulation of human capital in all sectors and that ensures that human efforts become the engine of growth via full employment and accelerated productivity growth.

South Korea's success in facing these three challenges makes it a model worthy of study and emulation. The first challenge is in meeting social objectives by giving priority to government expenditure on basic social services including education, health and infrastructure, and insisting on the participation of all segments of society in attaining the objectives through a national mobilisation effort. The second challenge is providing an economic environment that gives a general boost to economic activity in all sectors, in such a way that no potential opportunity is neglected and every human effort is rewarded. The third is selecting a growth strategy that maximises the value of human resources, both by exploiting labour in activities where its imperative advantage is high, and by gradually changing this advantage through the acquisition of skills and learning.

The unique nature of South Korea's blend of state intervention and respect for the market mechanism is perhaps one of the most difficult to reproduce in other developing countries. Yet, there is a sufficient number of basic principles that it has followed, and which can easily be used as guidelines to policy makers wishing to achieve a sustainable growth path. Two basic considerations make the Korean story relevant and applicable to other developing countries.

First, Korea started from one of the lowest levels of development in the 1950s, with a very poor resource endowment and practically no management experience either in the private or public sectors. Second, a significant number of the medium-sized countries in Southeast Asia have followed Korea's model with impressive results.

The evidence has by now confirmed that the "special conditions" prevailing in Korea's case, such as the availability of foreign aid or the relative openness of advanced country markets, were by no means "special". Instead, it was the package of policies pursued by Korea's successive governments, starting in 1962, which made it possible to achieve a consistently outstanding performance that has allowed Korea to graduate from poverty

to a level of wealth (GDP per capita of \$5,790 in 1992) that places it fourth among 127 developing countries on the UNDP's human development scale.

Indicators of success on the social and human development scales were the product of Korea's early pursuit of welfare improvements for the majority of the population. For example, universal enrolment in primary education was achieved in the mid-1960s and, by 1970, the average years of education for young adults was 6.6 — a figure that compares very favourably with Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. The eradication of illiteracy was also achieved early on by mobilising voluntary action especially women's clubs and the Saemul Undong movement in the countryside. In fact, the total expenditure on education has increased from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s at almost the same rate as that of GDP, and stood at 9.8 per cent of GDP in 1970 — a figure that is quite high by international standards.

By 1992, South Korea was still devoting 22.4 per cent of its total public expenditure to education, with 79 per cent of the education budget allocated to primary and secondary education.

However, it is important to take note of the fact that South Korea's relatively large expenditure is aimed at raising the quality of education. It has long ago achieved universal enrolment, and its primary school population is shrinking on account of success in reducing the rate of population growth to 1.1 per cent. In contrast, a substantial proportion of Arab countries' educational budgets are absorbed by expenditures to build additional classrooms and hire more teachers as the school age population continues to rise.

South Korea has also managed to improve considerably the general health of the population, lower the population growth rate and the infant mortality rate and increase income levels.

Moreover, South Korea has managed to maintain a remarkably equitable distribution of income, despite significant structural changes, market orientation and private sector leadership of the economy since the 1960s. Unlike most industrialisation efforts which have favoured industrial capital accumulation at the expense of exploiting the agricultural sector, South Korea's pricing policy was to subsidise farmers early on by purchasing rice and other staple crops at prices often twice those on the international market. Price incentives were comple-

mented with policies to encourage the use of mechanisation and discounted inputs, including subsidised fertilisers. These measures, together with large investments to expand irrigation, brought about significant annual increases in food production and allowed Korea in 1977 to regain self-sufficiency in rice production.

Consequently, wages, in both the agricultural and industrial sectors, registered rapid increases, the former on account of protection and the latter as a result of rising labour productivity and skill levels.

Although South Korea's trade unions have been heavily regulated and labour rights have been repressed over the entire economic growth period since the 1960s, state controls on the labour market were compensated for by the state's policies for rapid growth. These policies ensured some of the highest employment, productivity and real wages growth rates to be achieved internationally.

South Korea's model differs from other development models in a number of respects. This implies that there are certain variations that can be accommodated to the principal ingredients of a sustainable high speed growth mode, and that each country within the Arab world can apply its own nuances in adopting a South Korean-style development strategy. One feature of the South Korean model, which is specific to its circumstances, has been the support given to the creation of the large conglomerates or *chaebols*. These *chaebols* are an oligopolistic group of giant firms which hold assets in industry, trade and finance, and are similar to the Japanese *zaibatsus* — a handful of large corporations which dominated the high growth era of export-market penetration. Other economic "tigers", such as Singapore and Taiwan, have relied on a much more competitive structure of industrial organisation and a low level of concentration.

A second feature which is unique to South Korea's model of export-led growth is the restrictive attitude it has applied to foreign direct investment (FDI). Selective criteria were imposed on foreign capital so that only those foreign-owned projects that do not crowd out domestic enterprise would be invited to operate in South Korea, and on condition that they would contribute positively in the balance of payments. Close monitoring of FDI has shown that it could result in very high returns to the economy, not just on the standard income and employment generation expected, but also in the generation of exports.

However, today's globalisation of the world economy would make it exceedingly difficult for any one developing country alone to take such a selective stand to-

wards FDI. Furthermore, Arab countries must learn to cooperate with each other in this vital area, and to negotiate a common position from which they can improve their bargaining with multinational corporations.

A third characteristic of the South Korean strategy for rapid industrial diversification was an early reliance on the public sector to set up key industries, such as steel, petrochemicals, and fertilisers, that were considered vital to growth. This policy ensured that large and indivisible projects, which the relatively young private sector would find unattractive to establish, would be implemented given that such projects had high returns and linkages with other sectors of industry, trade and agriculture. Again, other Southeast Asian "miracle" economies did not rely on a public sector enterprise to any significant extent.

This particular feature of the South Korean development experience was, itself, short-lived, as private capital fast expanded and proved that it could also carry the burden of industrial diversification, with government intervention taking the indirect form of special incentives for high technology, high export potential industries, as well as the state's continued responsibility for enhancing the role of research, education and training and information.

On the whole, Arab countries today are at the developmental stage reached by South Korea in the mid-1970s — a time at which Korea's early package of growth policies and sectoral measures was being revised to eliminate direct state intervention, reduce indirect controls and incentives and allow the market to play a larger role in guiding the pattern of growth and the allocation of resources.

The lesson to be learned from South Korea's policymaking is that although the objectives and strategy of growth have been consistently the same — high growth — equity through export orientation and technology acquisition — the policy measures have varied continuously in line with changing domestic and international conditions and opportunities.

In every area of the economy, what the South Korean story tells us in the Arab world is that policies were continuously revised to tackle new or persisting problems, to improve on existing measures and to move gradually the economy from one that was partially state-controlled to one that was free.

The writer is a professor of economics at the American University in Cairo and head of the Cairo-based Economic Research Forum for the Arab Countries, Iran and Turkey.



## Listings

## EXHIBITIONS

**Gashin Stray**  
Egyptian Centre for International Cultural Cooperation, 11 Shagras Al-Dor St, Zamalek. Tel 341 5419. Watercolour by one of Egypt's leading contemporary artists Farouk El-At.

**Tahya Hallin**  
Khan El-Maghrabi Gallery, 18 El-Mansour Mohamed St, Zamalek. Tel 340 3349. Daily exc Sun, 10.30am-3pm & 5pm-8.30pm. Until 24 Dec. A selection of paintings and drawings by one of the most accomplished artists of her generation, a painter who, over five decades, has consistently explored the mysticism and beauty of the Egyptian landscape.

**Margo Vellon**  
Lower Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 337 5436. Daily 9am-5pm. Until 19 Dec. Celebrating the publication of the first book to cover the complete oeuvre of the artist, spanning some 70 years of production, this retrospective exhibition includes drawings and paintings by the artist drawn from all periods of her life.

**Extra Gallery, 3 El-Nessim St, Zamalek. Tel 340 6293. Daily exc Sun, 10.30am-3pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 12 Dec.** Paintings by the minister of culture.

**Amour Sherati (Paintings)**  
Egypco Gallery, 1 El-Sherifien St, Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Daily exc Fri, 10am-3pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 12 Dec.

**Salon 97**  
Heliopolis Sporting Club, Heliopolis. Daily 9am-10pm. Until 14 Dec. On display are the works of young and pioneering artists including Hussein Bilal, Youssef Francis, Hussein El-Ghaili and Fayza Abdel-Moneim Morsi.

**Ehsane Khalil (Paintings)**  
Opera Gallery, Opera House Grounds, Giza. Tel 341 2926. Daily 10am-6pm. Until 15 Dec. 4.30pm-8.30pm. Until 15 Dec.

**Louise Twilfik (Drawings)**  
Gawth Institute, 5 Abdel-Salam Arif St, Downtown. Tel 575 9877. Daily exc Sun & Sat, 10am-12pm; Fri 9am-12pm. Until 18 Dec.

**Sony Badawi**  
Salama Gallery, 36/1 Ahmed Oraby St, Mohandessin. Tel 340 3242. Daily exc Fri, 10am-3pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 18 Dec.

**The Portrait Photography of Van Lee**  
Sory Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 337 5436. Daily exc Sun, 10am-3pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 19 Dec.

**Works by the Armenian photographer Van Lee, including portraits of Doreya Chafiq, Dalida, Hussen and Youssef El-Saba, drawn from over 50 years to the business.**

**Wageeh Wahba**  
Masharawi Gallery, 8 Champollion St, Downtown. Tel 578 4494. Daily 10am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 19 Dec.

**Amour Zahran Salama (Paintings)**  
Cairo Art Center, 2 Karim El-Dawla St, Tahrir. Tel 574 6730. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 20 Dec.

**Berry Iversen (Photographs)**  
Cairo Art Center, 2 Karim El-Dawla St, Tahrir. Tel 574 6730. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 22 Dec.

**Maja Soric (Paintings)**  
Rashid Gallery, 6 El-Ghazal El-Wasta St, Zamalek. Tel 340 9991. Daily exc Fri, 11am-7pm. Until 22 Dec.

**Lina Bianchi Arriviera (Engravings)**  
Indian Cultural Centre, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsaf St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 10am-3pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 29 Dec.

**Exhibition under the title "The monuments of Lailah and Laila Ugh, Ethiopia."**

**Autism to Egyptian Art**  
Rare Books and Special Collections Library, corner of El-Sheikh Rihan and Mansour Mohamed Sts, Downtown. Tel 337 5436. Daily exc Sun, 10.30am-3pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 30 Dec.

**International Exhibition of Miniatures**  
Zakaria Soliman House, behind El-Azhar Mosque. Daily 10am-10pm. Until 31 Dec.

**Ussama Mohamed (Glassworks) & Abdel-Nasser Shihab (Bak)**  
Extra Gallery, 3 El-Nessim St, Corner of Mansour Mohamed St, Zamalek. Tel 340 6293. Daily exc Sun, 10.30am-3pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 31 Dec.

**Art Fair**  
Dakka Gallery, 20 Abdel Aziz Gharib St, across Mohamed Mahmoud St, Decoders' Tower, no 405. Tel 335 8367. Daily exc Fri, 12pm-8pm. Until 9 Jan.

**The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil**  
Dakka, Tel 335 8367. Daily exc Mon, 10am-5pm. Egypt's largest collection of nineteenth century European art, amassed by the late Mahmoud Khalil.

**Egyptian Museum**  
Tahrir St, Downtown. Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, 8am-3pm; Fri 9am-11.15pm & 1pm-3pm.

**Coptic Museum**  
Mar Girgis, Old Cairo. Tel 362 5766. Daily exc Fri, Sun-4pm; Fri 9am-11am & 1pm-3pm.

## Islamic Museum

Port Said St, Ahmed Maher St, Bab El-Khalq, Tel 390 9930/390 1520. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11.30am & 2pm-4pm.

**Museum of Modern Egyptian Art**  
Opera House Grounds, Giza. Tel 340 6861. Daily exc Mon, 10am-1pm & 3pm-5pm.

A permanent display of paintings and sculpture charting the modern art movement in Egypt from its earliest pioneers to latest practitioners.

**Mohamed Naghi Museum**  
Chateau Pyramide, 9 Mohamed Al-Ghaili St, Giza. Tel 340 6861. A museum devoted to the paintings of Mohamed Naghi (1888-1956), one of the pioneers of the modern Egyptian art movement.

**Mahmoud Mukhtar Museum**  
Tahrir St, Giza. Daily exc Sun and Mon, 9am-1.30pm. A permanent collection of works by the sculptor Mahmoud Mukhtar (d. 1934), whose gamine monument to Saad Zaghloul stands near Qasr El-Nil Bridge, and whose *Awakening* became, somewhat belatedly, an icon of post-revolutionary Egypt.

**Italian Films**  
Indian Cultural Centre, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsaf St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. The Legend of the Dying Swan (1988). Directed by Otari. 14 Dec. 6pm. The Last Emperor. Directed by Bernardo Bertolucci. 15 Dec. 6pm.

**Kabuki Kabuki**  
Mahmoud Mukhtar Museum, Tahrir St, Giza. Daily exc Sun and Mon, 9am-1.30pm. A permanent collection of works by the sculptor Mahmoud Mukhtar (d. 1934), whose gamine monument to Saad Zaghloul stands near Qasr El-Nil Bridge, and whose *Awakening* became, somewhat belatedly, an icon of post-revolutionary Egypt.

**Forest of the Little Bear (1987)**  
Japanese Cultural Centre, 106 Qasr El-Nil St, Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Daily exc Fri, 10am-3pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 12 Dec.

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**Small Hall, Opera House, Giza. Tel 341 2926. 17 Dec. 8pm.** Pianists Giovanni Carminelli and Giuseppe Piccoli perform compositions by Scarlatti, Liszt and Ravel.

**Campagna and Kazetlan**  
Gashin Stray, Gashin Stray St. Tel 341 2926. 17 Dec. 8pm. Spanish singer José Campaña, in collaboration with George Kazzetlan and his group Sabir, perform a concert of Flamenco, modern, Mediterranean and oriental music.

**El-Nour Wel-Amal**  
Ewart Hall, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 337 5436. 18 Dec. 8pm. The internationally renowned orchestra of blind girls gives a special concert.

**The Odele Singers Choir**  
Ewart Hall, AUC, as above. 18 Dec. 8pm. Under the direction of Larry Catlin, the choir will perform selections from *Ain't Misbehavin'* and *The Sound of Music*.

**DANCE**  
Alburtz Baller  
Gashin Stray, Gashin Stray St. Tel 341 2926. 15 & 16 Dec. 8pm. Flamenco and classical Spanish dance by 14 dancers with five singers and guitarists.

**Octobedon**  
Palace Theatre, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 337 5436. 12-16 Dec. 8pm. An experimental avant-garde play directed by Ingi El-Solh.

**THEATRE**  
El-Moharregoon (The Buffoons)  
El-Hamra Theatre, Opera House Grounds, Giza. Tel 340 6861. Daily 8pm. Until 12 Dec. Directed by Hani Abdel-Moneim.

**El-Hamra (The Guard)**  
Abdel-Rahim El-Zerani Hall, Es-Solh Theatre. Tel 391 7743. Daily 8pm. Directed by Mohamed Abdel-Hadi.

**Hekmat Hameed Almar**  
George Abdel-Hadi, Es-Solh Theatre, as above. Daily 8pm.

**Destoor Ya Shadua (With Your Permission, Madam)**  
El-Fann Theatre, Nadi El-Mustafa St. Ramat. Tel 578 2444. Daily 8.30pm.

**Belle (Feminine)**  
Madinet Nasr Theatre, Youssef Abbas St, Madinet Nasr. Tel 402 0804. Daily 8.30pm; Thur 10pm. Starring Salah El-Saadani, directed by Samir El-Afouki.

**El-Gazir (The Chain)**  
El-Solh Theatre, Qasr El-Ain. Tel 335 2484. Daily exc Mon, 8pm.

**Katy's All (High Heels)**  
Radio Theatre, 4 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 578 4910. Daily 8pm, Wed & Thur 10pm.

**El-Zaim (The Leader)**  
El-Hamra Theatre, Pyramids Road, Giza. Tel 386 3952. Daily 8pm, Wed & Thur 10pm.

**Gonzo El-Banat (The Madness Of Girls)**  
Mohamed Farid Theatre, Emadkhan St. Tel 770 603. Daily 8pm.

**El-Fares El-Amar (The Dark Knight)**  
Puppet Theatre, Auba St. Tel 591 0954. Thur-Sun. 6.30pm; Fri & Sun 11am.

**LECTURES**  
Life in the Southern Egyptian Desert During the Roman and Early Byzantine Periods.

Indian Cultural Centre, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsaf St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. 12 Dec. 5.30pm.

Lecture by Jean Biogen, University of Brussels.

Flamenco Origin and Traditions

Spanish Cultural Centre, 20 Boulvar Hanna St, Dokki. Tel 360 1746. 13 Dec. 7.30pm.

Lecture by Jose Campaña, Spanish Flamenco singer.

Civil Wars in Afghanistan and Talibanism from the Viewpoint of Japan

Room 5, 3rd floor, Bldg of the Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University. 14 Dec. 9pm.

Lecture by Masayuki Yamachi, professor of Asian history and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Tokyo.

Regional Economic Integration in the Light of the Arab-Israeli Peace Process

Oriental Hall, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 337 5436. 16 Dec. 8pm.

Lecture and panel discussion by Mona Mahmud Elmad, assistant lecturer of Sociology and Political Science, with Charles Diamond and Paul Sullivan, assistant professors of Economics.

Contemporary International Relations: A Diplomatic Perspective

Oriental Hall, AUC, as above. 17 Dec. 8pm.

Lecture by Moustafa El-Fiqi, Egyptian ambassador to Austria.

Recent Discoveries in the Mummy Research in Egypt

Pasha Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology in Cairo, 11 Mahalla St, Heliopolis. Tel 666 278. 17 Dec. 6pm.

Lecture by Andrzej Nawrocki, Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw.

All information current at time of going to press. However, it remains wise to check with venues first, since programmes, dates and times are subject to change at very short notice.

Please telephone or send information to Listings, Al-Ahram Weekly, Giza St, Cairo. Tel 5786064. Fax 5786089/853.

Compiled by Inji El-Kashif

Four Hands Concert for Piano

Rashid Masharawi's *Haifa*

## Same old stories

To mark UNESCO's choice of Cairo as regional cultural capital, Cairo International Film Festival has instigated a LE100,000 prize for the best Arab film. Hani Mustafa assesses some of the likely contenders

What would happen if the audience were to leave the cinema to enter another, just to see the same film over again? While this is not quite the case, it is, at most — at least in some respects, Arab cinema, as represented at this year's festival, and the festivals of previous years, seems to be stuck on the same old bus route, treating similar themes in a by now familiar way.

Crime reports, of the kind found in the popular press; Arab migrants in Europe; pressing political issues — these have been the most popular themes for Arab filmmakers in previous festivals, and they continue to dominate Arab entries in the 20th Cairo International Film Festival.

Last year the Tunisian film *Habiba Mesika* (The Fire Dance) (dir. Salma Beccar) was based on the life of a Tunisian singer who died in a fire in the 1920s, a story that attracted a great deal of press coverage — and indeed speculation — at the time. This year two of the Arab entries in the festival deal with crimes that received an equal amount of coverage in the contemporary press. Said Marzouk's *The Woman and the Cleaver* (Egypt), based on a much publicised story of an Egyptian wife who dismembered her husband and disposed of the remains in plastic bin liners, seeks to contextualise, socially and psychologically,

such extremes of domestic violence, while the Lebanese director Leyla Assaf, in *Al-Sheikha* (Freedom Girl), follows the activities of a gang of young car thieves, headed by a 10-year old girl, Sheikhna, who are intent on joy-riding through war-torn Beirut.

So much for documented crime. At the other extreme lie the plethora of fantasy features that have been produced by Arab directors. Last year the Syrian film *Ascending Rain* (dir. Abdel-Latif Abdel-Hamid) bordered on the surreal while Refaat El-Mehi's *Mit Fol* (Let's Kill our Dad) followed a similar vein. This year El-Mehi shows *Toufaha* (An Apple), a black comedy which mixes the fantastic and the quotidian. As such, it is clearly a continuation of El-Mehi's earlier work, both thematically and in terms of the financing of the production, since once more El-Mehi acts as producer as well as director.

El-Sayed Said's directorial debut, *The Captain* — an Egyptian entry in the Naguib Mahfouz competition — set in Port Said in 1948, also mixes the peculiar with the everyday. Cholera, displaced Palestinians, an occupied city seen from the perspective of a child, reconstructed, indeed, from the director's own memories of his childhood, combine in the evocation of an era that, though well within living memory, seems an age away.

Cinema from the Maghreb is, not surprisingly, preoccupied with the predicament of North African migrant labourers. Algerian director Merzak Al-louché's *Salut Cousin* confronts the subject head on through the experiences of an Algerian who, visiting France for the first time, meets his cousin, a second generation immigrant, while Moroccan director Hakim Nouri's *Dream Stealer* takes a more oblique view of the matter. In a plot concerning the friendship between two newly released criminals, the great escape from a life of crime is posited, by the one who seeks the straight and narrow, to be migration to the West.

The occupation of Palestinian land continues to dominate the film productions, as it does the lives, of Palestinians. Last year Michel Khalife's *Three Gems* focused on the experiences of children in the Gaza Strip, mixing the harshness of their day to day existence with the richness of traditional Palestinian folk tales. This year Palestine is represented by Rashid Masharawi's *Haifa*, a film dealing with a mentally disturbed man, living in a refugee camp in Gaza after being expelled from Haifa in 1948. The time frame of the film includes the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, and records responses to the division of Palestine finally sanctioned by those accords.

## Diary of a film-goer

In which Hossam Elwan fails to discover the three best things in life but learns that all men are mortal

## Wednesday, 4 Dec

Wake up, weather stormy. I go to the hall where press screenings take place and find there's time to go to the press centre. Mr Amir is bad tempered, but there are no stills from films or handouts without Mr Amir. It is 10am, and a note is being stuck on the press centre desk saying I will open at 11am. Do not ask for stills.

*See Outside Time*, by Andreas Klei-ner, the love story of an East German girl and a Russian soldier who remains after Russian forces are withdrawn. Klei-ner constructs a visually captivating film, tussling the details of a love that develops against a harsh backdrop that, while it does not brand the texture of the relationship, prepares the viewer for the violence of the hero's murder. Attendance is low, though the film is in the main competition. Later see a Slovenian production *Carman*.

Meet Mohamed Metwalli, a friend who wants to see the Dutch film *The Three Best Things in Life*. Already tried to see the film on Monday, only to find another film being screened, and decline his offer to join him. Later he tells me it was the best film he has ever seen, though refuses to say why.

6.30pm: *The Eighth Day* and I think this film I had better go. I remember later that I lent Mohamed a video of the film which he has neglected to return.

Thursday, 5 December

1.30pm: To the Small Hall of the Opera

where the American film *My Family* is replaced by an Italian production *Foxes*.

It is a disaster. 3.30pm: Small Hall scheduled screenings postponed till Thursday so that people can watch the Hitchcock film at Al-Hanagga. 5.00pm: *I've Had It Rough*, Gerlad Frydman's film, is cold and contrived and unbearably silly. Leave the auditorium after an hour and go to Marriott Hotel, only to discover that the festival guests have yet to arrive. Think perhaps they've been switched to the Sheraton.

Friday, 6 Dec

To the Small Hall to see *Seven Servants*, Daryush Shokov's film starring Anthony Quinn. My feelings are a little ambivalent, but then so is the film.

3.15pm, and I meet Rafiq El-Sabban who tells me that *The Best Three Things in Life* is to be screened at 6.30pm at Sayed Darwish Theatre.

By 3.30 I have resolved to see *Yontia's Blue Eyes*, an African production, in Portuguese, with French subtitles. The festival's catalogue does not provide a resume or even mention the film. It is presented by someone who talks at length about African cinema but mentions nothing about the film.

By 6.00 I am on a microbus heading to the Sayed Darwish Theatre. Arriving to discover that *Nostalgia for Countryland*, a Vietnamese production, has replaced *The Best Three Things in Life*.

Saturday, 7 Dec

Wake up knowing that



# Ripeness is all

Nehad Selaiha remembers  
Karam Mutaweh, who died on  
Monday, and assesses his career

As a person Mutaweh never left you much choice: you either loved or hated him. But whichever way you felt, you could not help acknowledging, however begrudgingly, the overwhelming presence of the man, the colourful vivaciousness of his character and his powerful charm. He walked and moved with the sinuous grace of a cat and even in a subdued mood and very somberly dressed, he made everyone around look drab in comparison. Like an aristocrat among plebeians, he made people feel slightly uneasy and apprehensive, and the elusive hint of quizzical irony that always tinged his voice could prove disconcerting. He was theatrical all right, but always in an elegant, subtle way; you could never imagine him gushing, violent or sentimental. Romantic, yes — in a distant, pensive way, but never mushy. In life, as well as in the theatre, he was a master of mood and intuition. If he chose, he could charm the light out of your eyes; the next moment, as likely as not, he could switch off with a sudden, sadistic remark and turn away, shrugging his shoulders. I often wondered if he was not constantly playing a game, indulging a passion for acting that his reputation and achievement as a director never allowed full scope. He had the makings of a star — good looks, charisma and sex-appeal; and he made a good beginning on the screen, playing the lead in a film on the life of the famous singer and composer Sayed Darwish. But he never made it as a film star, possibly he was far too theatrical, and the camera does not take kindly to that, or possibly he was far too involved in the theatre to give much time to films. My own guess is that his personality, sharp intelligence and artistic perspicacity, were in the end responsible for making film producers and directors shy away from him. He was difficult to approach, let alone lead and direct. With only 15 film appearances, did it rankle to see so many of his students, of far lesser talent than his, far outstrip him?

Ironically, for most ordinary Egyptians and Arabs nowadays, and particularly for those who were not around in the 1950s, Mutaweh is known primarily, and often solely, as a TV actor. A series of romantic roles in soap operas in recent years established him as a household name, and a clear favourite with the ladies. After one such soap opera, *Barides*, it was common to hear it jokingly said that half the women of Egypt were in love with Karam Mutaweh; and the remark carried more than a grain of credibility. It sounded flattering and doubtless gave its object some pleasure: it is no mean achievement for a man in his middle fifties to be

seen as the romantic hero of soap opera *per excellence*, especially when he had been regarded as unfit for the part when young. But there was something shamefully reductive in all this. Television may have brought Mutaweh fame and possibly fortune; but it is not for his parts on the small screen that he is going to be remembered. To know the full size and value of the man, one has to look to his career in the theatre.

Born in 1933, Mutaweh combined the study of law and theatre as an undergraduate, matriculating in both in 1956 and 1957 consecutively. In those years it was good to be young, talented, ambitious and of the Left. Ideologically, Mutaweh was a socialist revolutionary and an enthusiastic supporter of the Nasserite regime. (He remained a socialist till the end, albeit a disillusioned one.) He embraced the revolutionary project proposed by Nasser wholeheartedly and with it the notion of the politically committed artist. Like the majority of leading intellectuals then, he believed that the primary function of the arts, and of the theatre in particular, was to revolutionise society and heighten social consciousness. Fortunately for Mutaweh, the cultural policy of the regime then aimed at developing a new, revolutionary intellectual leadership and generously invested in scholarships abroad. Within a couple of years of graduation, Mutaweh found himself in Italy, at the age of 25, studying theatre. If this had not happened, would his talent have survived the stifling grip of dogma? One wonders.

Six years in Italy corrected the balance between art and ideology. He came back in 1964 as a revolutionary as ever, but he had gained a deep and wide experience of a large variety of theatre and developed an intense, meticulous consciousness of the aesthetic side of performance. He plunged headlong into work, creating a veritable furor with his production of Yusuf Idris' *Al-Faragheer* (The Underlings). For the second time, he had proved the favourite of fortune. It was a glorious start and gave him just the right kind of push at the right time. It was a stroke of luck his stumbling upon Idris at the time. After three plays, Idris had tired of realism and spent some time mulling over the question of dramatic form. In three articles, published in 1964, he explored the possibility of arriving at an authentically Arab theatrical mode based on the traditional forms of popular entertainment. To hone his ideas and by way of experimenting, he wrote *Al-Faragheer*. The experiment paid off and blazed a trail for a whole theatrical trend that is still with us today.

As the director of Idris' pioneering work, Mutaweh was caught up in the blaze and it carried him, instantly,

to the top. The production process was predictably tempestuous: both the playwright and director were young, wilful, confident and proud. Soon, they were at loggerheads, each insisting he knew better. What kept them from splitting was their deep appreciation of each other's talent. In the battle of wills, Mutaweh won, omitting the whole of the third act from the text, and producing a much more taut and less rambling play. The version that played at the National and was subsequently authorised for printing by Idris himself, is a credit to Mutaweh's artistic and critical sense.

Despite their much-publicised differences and disputes over *Al-Faragheer*, Idris and Mutaweh were essentially similar in their attitude to theatre and shared a common artistic and ideological ground. Both were keen experimenters and innovators and at the same time, quite paradoxically, passionate fundamentalists, intent on discovering an authentic identity for theatre rooted in the Egyptian soil. In the case of Mutaweh, this double pursuit of authenticity and innovation became evident when he took over the management of the Pocket Theatre on 13th July, 1964. In a series of productions, he brought the latest trends and techniques in directing to bear on texts ranging from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Goldeni's *Master of Two Servants* and Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard*, to an epic poem by the contemporary Egyptian poet Naguib Soroush, based on a popular, peasant love story, and a peasant drama by Shawqi Al-Hakim, based on a popular ballad.

In these productions, as well as in his overall managerial policy, whether as head of the Pocket Theatre, or the National, or the State theatre sector, Mutaweh established, perhaps for the first time in Egypt, the complete authority of the director over the performance and his right to interfere with the text. The notion of the theatre director as creative artist, rather than as executor of the author's will, was born then, starting the long feud between dramatists and directors. In these productions, too, Mutaweh developed and clarified his distinctive directorial style, which is his great achievement. It is an elusive style that shuns gimmickry, decoration and any gratuitous details, and concentrates instead on powerful lines, clear contours and sculptured formations. On the visual level, his productions carry a kind of dignity that is rare in the Egyptian theatre, and their austere simplicity is invariably imbued with a sense of urgency and pent-up



But the visual simplicity is always countered by aural richness, and I have never known an Egyptian director to expend as much care and attention on the sound and vocal texture of his production as Mutaweh did.

The last years of Mutaweh's life were turbulent. Politically, and on the public level, he was at peace with the regime at last; whether out of conviction or cynical lassitude is anybody's guess. The time of active, violent dissent which had driven him out of the country for years had gone by and he had settled into a kind of mellow melancholy underneath a theatrical mask of cynical, languorous nonchalance. But, on the personal level, and perhaps as a sign of a deep, spiritual malaise, there were storms and upheavals: after an exemplary marriage that lasted nearly 25 years and was regarded by many as a marriage of true minds, he suddenly divorced his wife, actress Sohair El-Murshidi, fell in love and quickly remarried, and one month before he died he was single again, with only his sister beside his sick bed. I only hope that in his final hours he could draw some consolation from remembering those glorious days in the sixties.

## Plain Talk

It is now 50 years since the founding of UNESCO. I had the pleasure of taking part in the two-member Egyptian delegation that participated in the inaugural meeting in London. The meeting laid down the founding principles of this organisation's responsibility, giving it a mandate to facilitate the circulation of ideas by "word and by image".

Ten months ago UNESCO devoted its publication, *Sources*, to books. The issue started with the question: "Will the hell toll for the book in the 'information age'?" And the answer was: "Fear not, for the book is and will continue to be an irreplaceable source of learning and pleasure as well as a foremost partner in the UNESCO mission to promote the circulation of ideas by word".

The issue contained a number of articles dealing with books and the publishing industry in several regions. Among the contents was a report on the experience of Mary Bugebe, the organiser of the Nairobi Pan-African Children's Books Fair, which has been held annually since 1993. Summing up the aims of the fair, she says: "There are too many kids who want to read but whose parents cannot afford to buy books. So we put up a tent with a library where they read and listen to storytellers while their parents arrange to swap books later".

UNESCO has organised a successful project in the Asia/Pacific region, aimed at promoting literacy and cultural awareness among children. The programme has so far produced 25 titles which have been translated into 27 Asian languages in over 18 countries. The books have also been printed in nine European languages and almost four million copies are currently in circulation. The titles are mainly anthologies of short stories and folktales, but also include a series of books on the environment; the first being a book about *Trees* — available in 20 languages — describing species of trees in the Asia/Pacific region. The emphasis is placed on science because "science is more neutral", according to the manager of the programme. "Yet we don't want to just present scientific information. We want to interest and motivate children," he added.

"Books, for the price of a newspaper" is the title of an article on a subject of relevance in Arab countries, although many Arabs may be oblivious to it — I certainly had never heard of it until I read the article. In November 1995 some 30 Arab and Latin American journalists gathered at the headquarters of Al-Andalus Heritage Organisation to launch a project — *Kilab fi Jarida* — aimed at "putting literature within the reach of greater numbers".

The idea of the Latin American countries was to share with the Arab world the recent experience of 26 daily newspapers in producing books and distributing them free of charge. So far the papers have produced 140 million copies of 37 titles representing a selection of the best known works in contemporary Spanish and Portuguese literatures. The project started in 1992, with the participating newspapers publishing monthly supplements presenting unabridged works by famous writers. Apart from contributing to the cultural integration of Portuguese and Spanish speaking countries, the project is also a means of promoting literature among large segments of the population with limited access to reading material.

I do not know whether the Arab project has taken off, but there is no doubt that such a project, in the words of Carlos Orrego, the writer of the article, "will keep societies from being increasingly caught in the grip of an audiovisual culture that in the end could hamper our collective capacity to read and write".

Mursi Saad El-Din

# Right on cue

Hala Halim attends one of the highlights of the Cultural Programme coinciding with the film festival, an open discussion with Youssef Chahine

The scene was so exquisitely choreographed it was worthy of Chahine. On screen is Chahine expounding on freedom of expression in one of the sequences of *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial), the late Mohamed Shabi's documentary on the lawsuit brought against Chahine's film *Al-Muhaghir*. Then the lights go on and Chahine himself enters to wild applause. But the choreographed entry was more the result of accident than design.

The cinema hall gathered last Wednesday in the basement of the Greater Cairo Library, where seminars on cinema are held as part of the Cultural Programme, which runs alongside the film festival, were there for a double-bill session: an open dialogue with directors Youssef Chahine and Tewfik Saleh — part of the festival's celebration of their twentieth birthdays, to be followed by a screening of *The Trial*. As it happened, the film was screened first and stopped after 10 minutes when Chahine was ushered in, somewhat late, by the moderator of the session, Ali Abu Shadi, film critic and recently appointed chief of the Censorship Bureau.

While at first the bracketing of Chahine — whose film *Al-Muhaghir* is banned — with the chief censor appeared somewhat anomalous the two quickly settled for a humorous routine, Chahine exaggerating his *enfant terrible* persona, turning to Abu Shadi mock-apologetically after every expletive, the latter feigning distress. Halfway through the session, they both settled on synonyms for Chahine's favourite expletives; thus, the adjective "dirty" ("a dirty story", "the dirtiest of the lot") was replaced by "unclean".

In the opening proceedings Abu Shadi expressed his regret that Tewfik Saleh could not be present on account of illness. The two authors, he said, had more than their year of birth in common: both were Alexandrians and both had graduated from Victoria College. Chahine's lateness, Abu Shadi said, was on account of his being very busy these days working on his new film on the Rashid. Chahine, on the other hand, said it was only half an hour before that he had heard he was expected at the Greater Cairo Library — barely enough time to shower and change to come and meet the audience looking respectable. And indeed he did look respectable, in a lavender shirt, a black waistcoat and a matching necktie, disconcerted as soon as it began to impede his expansive gestures.

After calling for an abstinent Chahine devoted his full attention to the audience. The first question is slightly zany: "How is it you have always managed to astonish and refresh us throughout your long and beautiful career?" Chahine, unsure he has caught the drift of the question, says if you're going to be a filmmaker, you can't be in it for the money, because if your films are any good they won't bring in much money; nor can you be in it for the fame. He then went on to list all the possibilities information technology has opened up for the filmmaker. He says that for the film he's working on he made an on-line request asking about the kind of colours used in Andalusia in the twelfth century and within three minutes received samples. Then, in typical disconcerting vein, he holds forth on the problems that face the Egyptian film industry, among them the piracy of films by illegal video copies, many of which are then widely distributed in Gulf states. "The day you feel like taking a

rest", he says, "is the day you go gaga. Well, I'm already half gaga, the other half I'm in no hurry for."

Other questions bring to the fore well-trodden pet peeves. Asked about the effectiveness of the Chamber of Film Industry, Chahine conspiratorially alleges that elections to the chamber have, in the past been controversial, that its members know nothing about their work, that the chamber does nothing to fix fees for the export of films and that Egyptian TV does a lot of dumping.

The ruler of an Arab country, Chahine recounts, "recently sent me a blizzard, requesting a copy of *Al-Muhaghir*". I told the blonde to tell him to get it from the nearest grocer in his neighbourhood. The author's historical epic films, including *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin) and *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte), formed the focus of some of the questions. A man who is obviously a close acquaintance of Chahine's (both the latter and Abu Shadi at first resented his asking questions since he had access to the director anyway), observed that the pattern of Chahine's production of his historical films had changed in recent years. While two decades separate *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* and *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte), Chahine's current project, set in the Andalusia of the twelfth century, came immediately after *Al-Muhaghir*, set in Pharaonic Egypt. He told the director to explain his growing penchant for historical films, Chahine, flustered by the question, reads in a subtle, to the effect that he eschews censorship by addressing current issues through historical allegory. When the man who asked the question tries to elaborate he is shouted down by Chahine: "I understood your question. Do you take me for an idiot?"

Chahine's answer is tentative, rambling. It's not just a question of state censorship, he speculates; there's an inner censorship too — one that you need continuously to pit yourself against.

The Ministry of Culture has banned one of my films. The Ministry of Justice has banned another. Chahine pauses, then continues: "There are things that need to be said... and history repeats itself. What did I feel when I was told my film was banned, was it what I felt when I was told my books were banned?" Nobody, he admonishes, has the right to another's opinions — "it's dangerous for us and dangerous for the Arabs."

As if out of tune with the general trend of the discussion, indeed with the distinctive thematic features of Chahine's oeuvre, a man who introduces himself as an employee in the Ministerial Council demands why Chahine has not undertaken an epic film on the 1973 war. Taken aback somewhat, Chahine begins carefully that there are still gaps in what we know about the war, that some of what we do



know is unverified. He says that the fallout of the war is palpable — the Open Door policy... etc. And that therefore it would be a big responsibility to make a film about the 73 War, a responsibility he would not like to shoulder on his own, particularly in view of the gaps in information. Then, warning up the subject, he says it would, in any case, have to be a propagandist film, that "the hero [of such a film] would inevitably turn out to be Kissinger, while in my opinion he's the dirtiest of the lot". Turning to Abu Shadi with a mischievous smile, Chahine corrects himself, "the uncleanness of the lot", eliciting a nod of paternalistic approval from the chief censor.

After 40 years of being at loggerheads with the censors, began another question, does he see any role for the censor now satellites are here to stay?

"The censors have given me a hell of a time", says Chahine. "But we are very optimistic once that Abu Shadi has been elected chief censor — he is, truly, one of us."

As to the wider issue of censorship, he reiterated that it went against the right of the artist to express his/her opinions and beliefs. Elaborating on his most recent experiences, he explained that censorship is at its worst when it comes to historical films. "They tell you since it's a historical film, we must go through it. You say, how dare you? What have you read?... And why do we have Holy Books, is it not so we can discuss them? And

perhaps I'm chronicle my times through another era. But soon, *Inshallah*, they'll close down the censorship bureau." At which point Abu Shadi grumbled about the prospect of his own unemployment. — "don't you serve drinks in this place?" — and Abu Shadi indicated there was time for only one more question. At this point, a young man came forward and began a rather startling anecdote he'd heard about Chahine.

"Some friends of friends of yours told me that while you were researching the story of the Prophet Joseph for *Al-Muhaghir*, when you read it in the Qur'an you said: 'What a beautiful story, how could Mohamed have written this?'" With remarkable self-composure, Chahine commented that he very much regretted that such a sentence was said at this session, that he harboured no hatred for anyone, not even for the lawyer who launched the lawsuit against *Al-Muhaghir*.

After a brief intermission, the screening of the documentary, *The Trial*, was resumed. The film which narrates only the first phase of the legal battle over *Al-Muhaghir*, ending with Chahine winning the suit on the grounds that the lawyer who brought the charges was not in a (religious) position to do so, was poignant. The jubilation at the release of *Al-Muhaghir*, by extension, the reassuring message that freedom of expression was still upheld in Egypt, are, in the view of 1996, tainted with the subsequent knowledge that Al-Azhar then took up the lawsuit and had the film banned in Egypt. To those in the audience who knew the late Mohamed Shabi or were acquainted with his work, seeing this, one of the installments of his series of documentaries on Chahine, was doubly poignant. But, despite — or perhaps because of — the fact that the documentary has already dated, one is able to appreciate Shabi's deft handling of the material, his skillful "defence" of Chahine with excerpts from the director's oeuvre illustrating or subverting arguments for or against the septuagenarian *enfant terrible* of Egyptian cinema.

## Cultural Programme of 20th CIFF

Thursday 12 Dec  
10.30pm: Screening of *Don Kotham*, followed by an open discussion with director Michel Goldman. 1.30pm: Screening of *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial), followed by an open discussion with director Zaki Karim. 6.00pm: Screening of *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin). 7.30pm: Screening of *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte).

Friday 13 Dec  
10.30pm: Screening of *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin). 1.30pm: Screening of *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte). 6.00pm: Screening of *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial). 7.30pm: Screening of *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin).

## Cairo International Film Festival Programme

### Thursday, 12 Dec

10.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)

Friday, 13 Dec  
10.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
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6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)

Saturday, 14 Dec  
10.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)

Sunday, 15 Dec  
10.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)

Monday, 16 Dec  
10.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)

Tuesday, 17 Dec  
10.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
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6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)

Wednesday, 18 Dec  
10.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
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6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)

Thursday, 19 Dec  
10.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)

Friday, 20 Dec  
10.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)  
6.30pm: *Al-Muhaghir* (The Trial)  
6.30pm: *Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din* (Saladin)  
6.30pm: *Wadwan Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte)

Compiled by Inly El-Kashef



# The heat is on

Global warming, which scientists predict may have drastic effects on human life, aquatic resources and agriculture on the planet, is also one of the most complex environmental problems facing development workers in Egypt and in the world at large. Last week, the United Nations Development Programme and the Energy Planning Authority held a seminar aimed at enhancing national capabilities in climate change.

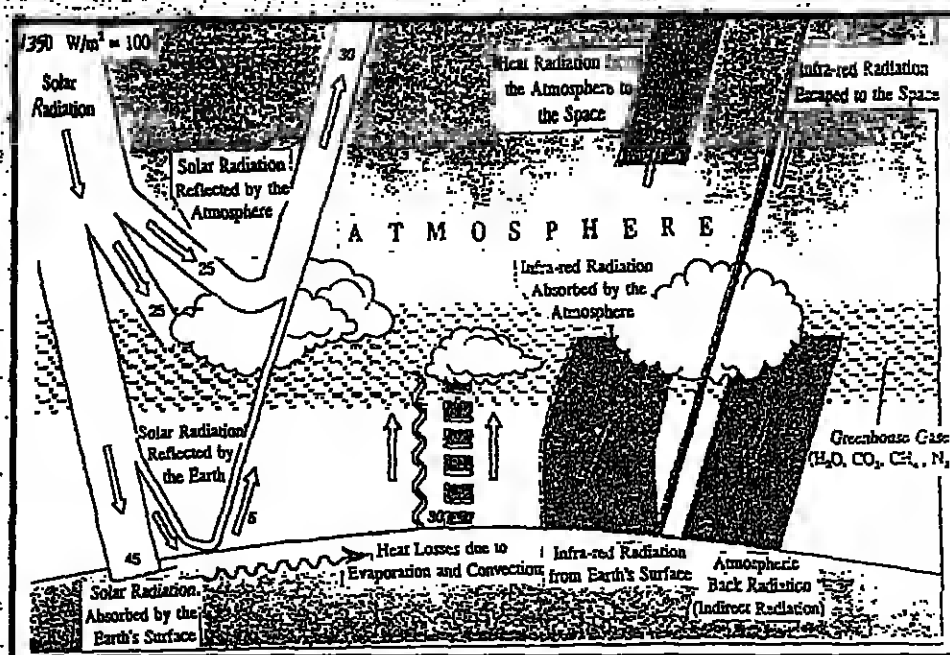
The use of increasing amounts of fossil fuels, the main source of energy for industry in the developed industrial countries (and potentially in less industrialised countries aspiring to industrialisation) has resulted in increasing rates of carbon dioxide emissions, and has raised the temperature on the planet.

Osama El-Kholi, consultant to the Egyptian Environment Affairs Agency (EEAA), attributed the problem of climate change to prevailing patterns of consumption. El-Kholi called fossil fuels "the principal reason for global warming". Fossil fuel combustion has caused increasing emissions of certain gases (mainly carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, volatile compounds and materials used in cooling and air conditioning facilities), and may be linked directly to the intensification of industrial activities since the onset of the industrial revolution. Carbon dioxide emissions greatly exceed other greenhouse gases and are therefore considered the main cause of the phenomenon of global warming.

El-Kholi predicts that if global warming persists unchecked, the planet will suffer. Water levels in seas and oceans will rise as ice-caps in the polar regions melt. Large stretches of coastline and low-lying islands, including the Nile Delta, will be submerged. Habitual patterns of rainfall — those according to which cultivation systems are planned — will be altered. Crop production and fishing will suffer, tidal waves and storms will occur with increasing frequency. New pests and diseases will proliferate.

One of the first developing countries to study the possible effects of climate change on national development, Egypt began a total inventory of greenhouse gas emissions even before signing the Convention on Climate Change presented by the United Nations Secretariat at the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit. At the end of 1993, the Egyptian and US governments signed an agreement initiating a joint research project, aimed at examining the basic in-

**Global warming was the hot topic at a recent UNDP conference. Any good news? Cotton exporters should be optimistic. Mahmoud Bakr attended**



Map courtesy of Osama El-Kholi detailing the interaction of evaporation and radiation which under certain conditions will result in global warming

ventory and assessing possible consequences of climate change in Egypt, which is presently in its final phase. Another project aims at formulating a national plan of action to address the potential consequences of climate change.

Jamhili Abdel-Galil El-Sayed, chairman of the Energy Planning Organisation, emphasised that the adoption of clean technologies which reduce greenhouse gas emissions should be a global commitment required by the Convention on Climate Change signed by over a hundred states during the Earth Summit held in 1992. Egypt, by virtue of its geographical and economic conditions, is considered one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the negative consequences of climate change.

Enumerating Egypt's efforts in this domain, El-Sayed noted that a national strategy to address climate change is being formulated with inputs from the Environment Affairs Organisation, the Energy Planning Organisation and other organisations and agencies with the assistance of a team of Egyptian scientists.

The national plan will explore the possibility of introducing clean technologies into the domestic market and identifying Egypt's resource needs in order to inform policy on information exchanges, capacity building, research and development pro-

grammes, technical and financial support, community-based programmes and the participation of non-governmental organisations. The issue of climate change is particularly relevant to Egypt because of limited food, water and land resources, and because of the danger that the Delta (which accommodates some 65 per cent of Egypt's population) may become submerged by the flood waters. The Nile, which provides Egypt with 90 per cent of its water resources, may also suffer. Egypt's northern coastal region, which is of substantial value to the national economy, will also be devastated by floods.

On climate change and coastal resources, Mohamed Ezzeddin El-Ra'i, dean of the Institute for Research and Graduate Studies at the University of Alexandria, expected the increase in greenhouse gas emissions to raise the temperature of the earth by an average of 1.5 to 3 degrees centigrade in the coming century. Water levels will rise by 25 to 110 centimetres on average during the coming century, flooding many coastal areas. The rise in temperature will also affect the rate and distribution of rainfall and the speed of wind. Evaporation will increase with the rise in temperature, thus aggravating aridity. Coastal and desert areas and their communities will be the worst affected by climate change.

built on land threatened by the rise in the sea level. Global warming, however, remains controversial. Despite the presence of certain indicators indicating a rise in temperature in the Nile Valley, carbon dioxide emissions in this region are far below the levels of industrial countries, according to Diaddin El-Qousi, vice-president of the National Centre for Aquatic Research at the Ministry of Public Works and Water Resources. El-Qousi, however, expected climate change to lead to the rise in sea level, and to affect the quality of underground water in coastal water basins, shallow basins and drainage canals in the Delta. He also predicted changes in the quality of surface water as a result of changing evaporation rates.

Helmi Mohamed Eid, director of the Agricultural Meteorological and Climate Change Research Centre, discussed the effect of climate change on the agricultural sector in Egypt. According to a study initiated in 1989 by a research team from the Land and Water Research Institute, climate change will produce negative effects on the production of wheat, barley, maize, sorghum, rice and soybean by 2050. Tests measuring crop sensitivity to temperature increase predicted positive results for cotton, as the productivity of cotton is expected to substantially increase with climate change.



## Dial an angel

Many of my colleagues are young women with small or not so small children, but children nevertheless, who cannot be left home alone. Most of these parents model their schedules on those of their offspring, which is rarely that of the workplace. Exceptionally, they have the advantage of a doting mother who is willing to dedicate the rest of her life to looking after her grandchildren, but I must say that these saintly women are few and far between. Usually, having done their own time in the service, aging mothers are only too happy — and quite rightly so — to bow out of the diaper and/or homework business. Often they are working women in their own right and, since they have been freed of the burden of a husband and children, they are often more successful than their daughters. As a rule, daughters and daughters-in-law of women with independent means must go through hell performing an impossible balancing act in order to keep husband, children and house reasonably satisfied. Results of new studies, furthermore, show that the "new man" — touted as willing and able to share and care with the best of them — exerts most of his efforts trying to do the bare minimum. The only difference, it seems, between the "new" and the "old" is that the old did not even countenance their womenfolk's timid requests for assistance. The new, on the other hand, are all empathy and understanding. The women still do the work, though. The world at large no longer opposes women in the work force — it would be difficult to do without them, as a matter of fact — but, by sneakily destroying the extended family, it has dealt a stunner blow on a mortal blow. The more logistics required to be in two places at the same time are enough to baffle the craftiest strategist, and there is no help forthcoming. There hasn't been in more than thirty years. In my days the problems were exactly the same. I remember the year, back in the sixties, when I employed, in rapid succession, 27 nannies for my baby daughter. One was an inveterate drunk, the other was insane, a couple robbed us blind, and others left for their day off, never to be seen again. We found one on the sidewalks in front of the house one day, propped up and down in search of more lucrative employment.

Australia brought its own crop of misfits, who for some unfathomable reason considered babysitting a suitable occupation. "You'll find plenty of child care centres," the immigration officer had told us. We didn't. Not at first, anyway. We had to make do with those who looked our daughter up in her room while their boyfriend was visiting — we drew the line when they looked her up in the wardrobe — those who smoked pot, practiced strange religions or pretended to cast spells, took the child to the beach without our permission or polished off the contents of the refrigerator every day. Schools obviously sent children home at three, while bosses insisted that parents should stay at work until five. The gap had to be bridged somehow. On normal days, that is. There were the crises too, those which kept erupting at the most inconvenient times. Then, a 3-to-5 baby sitter had to be replaced by that rarest of creatures, a full-time one.

I vividly remember one early morning when my daughter awoke with a face twice its normal size and complained of a violent headache. She had developed mumps during the night, and I, having applied for a new position, was due to take an important exam a couple of hours later. "Can't you stay home for once?" I implored my husband. He gave me that particular look, a mixture of mild surprise and indulgent humour, which meant that he feared for my sanity. Meanwhile, the doctor had arrived, and confirmed my diagnosis. "Here," he said, extending a visiting card. "Call these people, they will send you someone to look after the child."

The service was aptly called "Dial an Angel". At this particular time, I needed no less. Their advertisement did not lie. Within 15 minutes the doorbell rang. I could still make it to work on time. Opening the door with a smile of relief, I stopped short and gasped. The "angel" was a mole-for-mole replica of Maleficent the wicked witch. My daughter was a big fan of fairy tales and here was the witch, coming to baby-sit. Feeling like an unworthy mother, I opened the door a little wider. The crooked nose and toothless mouth were unmistakable. The creature was carrying a huge bag. This was all too much for a sick child. I was about to shut the door on the nightmare, when she peeped past me. "You don't like my looks," she giggled. "But your child will love me." I had very serious doubts. I watched my daughter's eyes widen in disbelief, then fill with tears. Before she could scream in horror, however, the old woman placed a lovely soft doll in her arms, distracting her long enough to start extracting a number of objects from her sack. There was a dark sheet and a number of interesting looking puppets. "Go get dressed," she ordered me, "you don't want to be late." A few minutes later, my daughter was resting her swollen neck comfortably on her pillows, being treated to what looked like a fascinating puppet show. When I kissed her goodbye, she waved me off impatiently. "Go, mummy, go, you're interrupting my show," she said.

Fayza Hassan

## The visitor who came to stay

Francine Henrich was the European Commission's mission head in Cairo from 1985 to 1991. She tells Nermeen Abdel-Fattah about coming back

Francine Henrich had never visited Egypt before, but she immediately fell in love with the country and the people, so much so that she thought of Egypt as her second home, and her Egyptian friends as her family.

After she was transferred to India, late in 1991, she continued to return at least once, if not twice, a year. Henrich has more than 35 years of work in politics, in France or abroad with the EU, behind her.

Henrich was educated at one of the best girls' schools in Nancy, Lorraine. She moved to Paris to attend the prestigious School of Political Science, where she studied international relations and international law. After graduation, she was assigned to the French Embassy in Germany as assistant to the Financial Counsellor. In the early sixties, when enthusiasm for a united Europe first emerged, she began work at the Luxembourg-based Permanent Secretariat of the European Parliament, on the Economic and Financial Committee. Later, she moved to the Foreign Affairs Committee, and was put in charge of African and developing countries. She spent 13 years in the parliament. In 1974, she shifted to the Ministry of Agriculture, as a special adviser for International European Affairs. She took leave of absence from parliament. Great Britain, Ireland and Denmark were making a bid to join the community, and

Henrich was on the French delegation to the negotiations. "They were very long and difficult, but it was a fascinating time," she remembers.

Henrich went back to the European Parliament, this time as the principal administrator at the External Affairs Committee, in charge of relations with developing countries. Commissioner Claude Cheysson offered her the post of special envoy to the then Congo, and she accepted with alacrity. Henrich spent four and a half years in the Congo under three presidents. Her next post was Tunisia, then the headquarters of both the Arab League and the PLO. Her relation with Arafat was "very good", and improved further after she was transferred to Egypt in 1985, when the Community undertook special humanitarian activities in Gaza and the occupied territories.

Egypt was one of the posts she enjoyed most. "I had a lot of job satisfaction. I was very motivated by the excellent cooperation I had with the government. We worked together very hard, very hard indeed, but with success." She mentions as examples a pilot project in self-sustainable development carried out in various governorates, as well as the Helwan Waste Water Project.

When Henrich comes to Egypt, she always feels that she is coming home: "Just as President Chirac says, 'when I'm in Egypt, I don't feel I'm in a foreign country'. Egypt is my country too, half my



family is here," says Henrich of her Egyptian friends, with whom she shares true family occasions. "As a matter of fact, I have more friends here than in France, which I left for so long."

Her fourth and last post as EU ambassador was in India, where she stayed for another four and a half years before finally leaving in resignation.

Henrich, has always been an avid art collector, with a particular interest in Egyptian modern art, for which she developed a marked taste when she first came to Egypt. Her collection includes works by

Gazbiya Sirry, Mohamed Ahla, Bahgory, Ahmed Morsi, Abdel-Hadi El-Gazzar and Seif Wanly. She has also organised several exhibitions of Egyptian painters' works in France. For Henrich, sponsoring Egyptian artists is not a job but "a hobby, and a pleasure". For the time being, though, Henrich is considering her next professional move. Art is for relaxation, she insists, and she is planning a political comeback soon. "I have to move," she says, "but I will always do so in relation to Egypt."

### Sufra Dayma

#### Cauliflower and minced meat

##### Ingredients:

1 medium cauliflower  
1/4 kg minced meat (cooked)  
1 onion (finely chopped)  
1 tsp. crushed garlic  
1 tsp. cumin (ground)  
1 cup tomato juice  
2 heaped tsp. tomato paste  
Salt + pepper + allspice + ground nutmeg  
Butter  
Corn oil

##### Method

Cut the cauliflower into florets with a part of the stem, then boil water in a large cooking pan, with some salt and cumin to absorb some of the cauliflower's carbon di-sulphide, then boil the florets until just tender. Put in an aluminium strainer and leave to cool. In another cooking pan, melt some butter, add the onion, stir fry gently, then add garlic and stir. Add tomato juice and paste, bring to a boil, season and add the cooked minced meat. Let simmer then lower heat and leave to reduce. In the meantime pour some oil in a frying pan and gently fry the boiled cauliflower florets, removing onto kitchen blotting paper. When all the cauliflower is fried, add one cup of hot water to the tomato and minced meat mixture, then add the cauliflower. Mix all ingredients well and leave to cook together for 15 minutes. Place in a baking dish and continue cooking in a preheated medium oven for another 15 minutes or until the top is slightly browned. Serve with rice, *kofta* fingers and a rich green salad.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

### Restaurant review

#### Well-intentioned vegetables

Nigel Ryan on the crisp but cool

Rather than the more conventional posy, Aubergine places vegetables on the tables, a courgette here, something else in season there, but always — a nod in the direction of the name of the restaurant — a large, leathery, imperially purple aubergine. You might think that the result would be something akin to a harvest festival. This, however, is not the case, since everything is done, more or less, with restraint.

Aubergine used to be El Patio, that ill-fated venue in Zamalek that, for as long as I can remember, has been "under new management" with alarming regularity. Now it is a vegetarian restaurant, hence the harvest festival table decorations.

There is a kind of earnestness that vegetables seem destined to bring to the surface, and it has something to do with notions of the simple, healthy, good life. Plates, rather than being china, are earthenware. Food is served in large casserole dishes, beer in pottery beakers. But apart from the new look pottery, and the vegetable theme, the interior of the restaurant is very much as it always was, white painted, simple, vaguely Mediterranean.

The menu, though not extensive, is comprehensive enough. Some of the items, a crepe, I remember particularly, stuffed with a mixture of refried beans, avocado and a third ingredient that escapes me, sound alarming. Others, though, read more temptingly.

We ordered soup — one sweet corn, the other cabbage, leek and blue cheese, followed by polenta with tomato sauce and mozzarella, and broccoli and cauliflower au gratin. First came bread, which was

fresh if not particularly good. The cabbage and leek soup, complete with a dollop of what tasted like Danish blue, was fine. I confess to a faint aversion to sweet corn, though my lunch companion found his soup palatable, if a trifle bland.

Then came the polenta, served in an enormous bowl, and the broccoli and cauliflower in an even larger lidded dish. The former, a slightly too runny semolina mix beneath a soupy tomato sauce with globules of melted mozzarella, really could have done with a little more dressing up. It was far from inspiring. And while the broccoli and cauliflower was well-intentioned — care had been taken that the vegetables would remain *al dente* — it was marred by a cheese sauce that was nondescript and far too floury. Both dishes were served with flourishes, by a waiter who panted out that they were very hot and so should not be touched, something that turned out to be wishful thinking since the dishes, like their contents, were both tepid.

We were the only customers in the restaurant at lunch time, and several items on the menu did not seem to be available. In all fairness to Aubergine, I will return, and apart from the leek and cabbage soup, will order different items. Other people have good reports of the food, so it may be that they were caught on a bad day by two customers whose ordering was itself uninspired. But with a hill that reached over LE90, including two local beers, one really can expect just a little more though not, I hasten to add, in terms of quantity, which was copious. The service was exemplary.

Aubergine, Sayed El Bakri St, Zamalek

### Al-Ahram Weekly

#### Crossword

By Samia Abdennour

##### Across

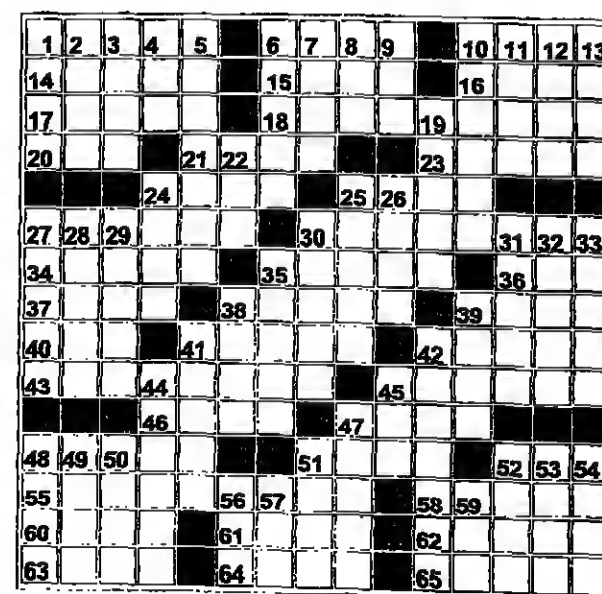
1. Take off after (5)
6. Blueprint (4)
10. Prolonged unconsciousness (4)
14. Mature (5)
15. Revolt (4)
16. North African port (4)
17. Territories (5)
18. Momentous (5)
20. Stratum; resting place (3)
21. Chandler (4)
23. He held the pillars of the universe (5)
24. Fury (4)
25. Melancholy folk-song (4)
27. Stanza of eight lines (6)
30. Yearbooks (8)
34. Want with all one's heart (5)
35. Navigate (5)
36. Witty saying (3)
37. At this point (4)

DOWN

1. Ten-footed crustacean (4)
2. Employ (4)
3. Mimicked (4)
4. Black, Red or Dead (3)
5. Subjugate (7)
6. Grade A (5)
7. Hobbles; flaccid (4)
8. Viper (3)
9. Comb. form of 56 Down (3)
10. Become attracted to; sew (three) (6)
11. Voiced (4)

##### Down

38. Glided (5)
39. Melted or Urania (4)
40. ... el Bar (3)
41. Coraries (5)
42. Binder (5)
43. Settle in different country (8)
45. Of North Wind (6)
46. Put on record (4)
47. Listen (4)
48. Hum in subdued voice (5)
51. Fluff (4)
52. Loved one (3)
55. Added (9)
58. Raise the spirits of (5)
60. Patellar region (4)
61. Comfort (4)
62. Of one's birth (5)
63. French summers (4)
64. Badinage (4)
65. Domicile; tarry (5)



12. Prestige (4)
13. Pismires (4)
19. Apparatus for detecting direction (5)
22. Aeon (3)
24. Be delirious (4)
25. Hanging lips of bloodhound (5)
26. So be it (4)
27. Pale brownish yellow (5)
28. Choicest part (3)
29. Stanks of birds' legs (5)
30. Expiate (5)
31. Tickle one's fancy (5)
32. ... Rica (5)
33. Inivgorate; malleable alloy (5)
35. Roofing material (5)
38. Horizontal (4)
39. Identification (4)
41. Old ewe (5)
43. Give warning of (7)
44. Leprechauns (6)
45. Taboo (3)
46. Pelts (5)
48. Cookie (4)
49. Dwarf; small pig (4)
50. S-shaped line (4)
51. For fear that (4)
52. Seat of intellect (4)
53. And others, L. 2 wds. (4)
54. William ... Swiss marksman (4)
56. Recent (3)
57. Japanese bream (3)
59. Commandment (3)





# Celebrating the master

Last week, in his regular column in this paper, Naguib Mahfouz recalled that he was well over 50 before marking his birthday with a party. But times change and the Nobel laureate's 85th birthday yesterday was the culmination of three days of celebrations, including screenings of films based on his novels, displays of some of the 235 translations of his works, and the launch of the Naguib Mahfouz

Medal for Literature, a new award to be announced annually on 11 December.

"The announcement of this award honouring writers and literature," said Mahfouz, "has been the most pleasurable event of my birthday. I hope that it will help uncover new talents in Arabic literature."

The award — sponsored by the American University in Cairo — comprising a silver medal and a

cash prize of \$1,000, will be presented to the author of the best contemporary novel published in Arabic, the recipient to be decided by a panel comprising Ali El-Rai, Abdel-Moneim Tallima, Hoda Wasfi, Ferial Ghazoul and Mark Linz, director of AUC Press. This year's award winner is Ibrahim Abdel-Meguid.

Nor are celebrations of Naguib Mahfouz's birthday limited to his homeland. This month also sees

the publication in France of *Mon Egypte*, a collection of conversations between the Arab world's most celebrated novelist and Mohamed Salmawy, executive editor-in-chief of *Al-Ahram Hebdo*, accompanied by photographs by Gilles Perrin — some of which are reproduced below — while Naguib Mahfouz has himself been busy giving interviews to foreign journalists, including German television, as reported by Khaled Dawoud



Images of Mahfouz's Egypt as captured by Gilles Perrin in *Mon Egypte* (left); The American University in Cairo's Naguib Mahfouz Silver Medal For Literature (above)



## Mahfouz at 85: 'I still exist'

Nobel Prize-winning novelist Naguib Mahfouz celebrated his 85th birthday yesterday while being deprived for more than two years of something which he said reminded him that he continued to exist: writing.

Since he was stabbed in the neck by a young Islamist militant in October 1994, Mahfouz said that he is still unable to use his right hand to write, and what makes this mission even more impossible is that he cannot see his work because of his extremely poor eyesight.

Despite all the celebrations held in Egypt to mark Mahfouz's 85th birthday, the prominent novelist was unable to attend any of them due to his poor health. But although he is physically weak and his movements are slow, his mind is very much alive. A group of friends visit him daily to update the novelist on the latest in international politics, literature, art and cinema.

Mahfouz's schedule this week was packed with interviews with dozens of American and European media organisations hoping to hear words of wisdom from the man whose novels are seen as the most genuine and accurate reflections of Egyptian society at a certain stage of its history.

In a lengthy interview with the German television channel, ZDF, Mahfouz described his daily routine since the attack against him: someone reads him the newspaper every morning, physical therapists help him exercise his right arm, and

in the afternoon friends take him out, accompanied by a police guard, to sit somewhere for a couple of hours for lively discussions. "They [his friends] are my contact with the outside world," he told ZDF.

Meanwhile, Mahfouz's strong will, according to the author, has helped him avoid depression. "The only thing I need is a sleeping pill to help me sleep at night. Also this has to function again [raising his right hand] so that I can resume writing because I am one of those writers who think by using their hands."

Asked about the psychological effect of the attempt on his life, he said: "I felt that something unjust happened to me, adding to my weakness as an old man. I was deprived of movement while I was a man who used to walk half of Cairo back and forth every morning."

Will Mahfouz be able to resume writing? "I cannot write any more novels. The problem is not only that my hand cannot write, but also my eyes cannot see. In novels, one has to read what one writes in order to recall the atmosphere and the spirit of writing. Now, if I was cured, the maximum I could think of writing is very short stories, ones which could be written all at once without reading what was written before."

Mahfouz said that he wrote short stories up until 24 hours before the attack. This work produced a collection of stories

which he publishes every few months in Al-Ahram's women's magazine, *Nisf El-Donya*. "This makes me comfortable and proves that I still exist," he said. Only four or five stories are left and the author says he doesn't know whether or not he will be able to write again.

In the ZDF interview, Mahfouz blasted "extremists" saying that they consider everything as *haram* (forbidden by religion). He added that extremist views have always existed, even since he was a young man. But extremism becomes more dangerous when it is coupled with violence, according to the author. "We have always had people who say music is *haram* and art is *haram*, but because we were living in a free climate, nobody listened to them."

Such violence, he said, made it necessary for the government to respond with violence. "These are people who are using bullets. So, the police must arrest them and fire back."

"Yet, police alone are not enough," he continued. "There has to be an intellectual mobilisation against extremist views in schools and media. The economic situation also has to be improved because rising unemployment induces more young men to join extremists. In addition to police action, intellectual campaign and improving the economy, there has to be a fourth tool: taking new steps towards democracy because a free atmosphere and respect of human rights teach

young men to follow the same method while dealing with others."

Mahfouz described the present religious atmosphere in Egypt as "very bad." He said that was due to "the spread of extremist views, rejected by true Islam, among a large sector of the population through cassette tapes including speeches by extremist figures. They reject everything, be it music or literature, even if they had nothing to do with religion."

In the German television interview, Mahfouz was asked whether the present atmosphere in Egypt and the threats against his life would persuade him to rewrite parts of *Al-Had Harema*, or "Children of Ghabala", the famous novel which Al-Azhar banned and which extremists cited to justify the attempt on his life. "You mean changing the novel in order to satisfy the extremists? I would never think of that. It is over, I have written it and what is done is done. I have even received the punishment without trial," he replied with a hearty laugh.

Mahfouz was honoured this week at Cairo's 20th International Film Festival where a special prize in his name was awarded to the best first production by any of the participating directors. He was also honoured by the American University in Cairo, the main publisher of his work in English; the university hosted several lectures and screenings of films based on his novels to mark his birthday.

## A different way to live

Stockholm hosts an annual alternative to the Nobel Prize. Dominique Tawfik reviews The Right Livelihood Award's history

The Right Livelihood Award, often known as the "Alternative Nobel Prize", is presented yearly in Stockholm on 9 December, the day before the Nobel Prize presentations.

The founder of the Right Livelihood Award, Jacob von Uexkull, a Swedish-German writer, philatelist expert and former member of the European Parliament, explained the concept behind the award: "We live in a period of global confusion and doubt. Practical, replicable projects dealing with the challenges facing us are few and far between. This award is for such projects — the cornerstones of a new world which we can enjoy living in." The awards are offered to people working to develop alternative approaches in the areas of human rights, people's economics, ecological conservation and appropriate technology.

Hassan Fathy of Egypt received the first Right Livelihood Award in 1980 for developing architecture for the poor. Finding appropriate ways to address the needs of a community through self-motivated efforts is an on-going process in Egypt.

Right Livelihood Awards were distributed this year for four initiatives that question the prevailing orthodoxies in economics, human development, health, and peace.

American Herman Daly was rewarded for proposing an economic paradigm which challenges mainstream economics by recognising the importance of community, quality of life, and the environment. Daly's books include: *Economics, Ecology, Ethics for the Common Good*; *Redesigning the Economy Toward the Community*; *the Environment and a Sustainable Future*, as well as *Population, Technology and Lifestyle*, co-edited with Egyptian economist S. El-Serafi.

Commenting on Daly's work, Yasser Sherif, manager of the Egyptian Pollution Abatement Project at the Egyptian Environment Affairs Agency, said that the current world system is tailored to achieve one specific objective, namely economic growth. Whether high or low on the scale of economic growth, all countries are engaged in this process and Egypt is quite successful in keeping up with the trend. However, according to Sherif, sooner or later, alternative objectives will have

to be found because of the magnitude of problems like rampant unemployment and economical marginalisation of people and countries which the present system engenders worldwide. The constraints of nature also go against perpetual growth, he asserted.

Daly is an economist who believes objectives need to be reconsidered. According to Sherif, people like Daly exert a vital influence on standard economic theory. Although no country can escape globalisation and Egypt, like other countries, has to stay in the mainstream, it must keep an eye on alternative proposals such as Daly's, said Sherif.

He concluded, "No country can move alone to an alternative economic system. Hopefully gradual, this move will be global too."

From its inception in 1980, the Right Livelihood Award Foundation has rewarded groups working to better their communities. Networks between people who had hitherto often been unaware of each other have thus been created.

Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishat (KSSP), the Science and Literature Forum of Kerala, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) from Kerala State, south-west India, was rewarded this year by the foundation for its practical success with the "Kerala model" which brings about high human development despite low income. KSSP has promoted higher education and the mass dissemination of science in Kerala, a predominantly traditional agricultural society.

A major force behind the programme through which Kerala achieved total literacy in 1991, KSSP excels in the area of science publishing. KSSP receives no foreign aid and in 1994 income generated from the sale of science publications amounted to nearly 90 per cent of KSSP's total income.

With headquarters in Cairo, the Arab Organisation for Youth and the Environment (AOYE), created in 1978, is an example of an Egyptian NGO which participates in community development. AOYE programmes include the Environment and Sustainable Development Programme whose theme this year is energy; Clean-Up Egypt that deals with solid waste management; and the National Water Conservation Pro-

gramme.

"The creation of a cadre of people, mostly young, to promote public awareness on the need to preserve Egypt's environment is one of AOYE's principal objectives; another one is the promotion of NGO activities in the Arab world," explained AOYE President Emad Adli.

He added that AOYE, like KSSP, has produced and distributed books. This project, however, has not met with the same financial success as in Kerala because extracurricular interest in science and technical books in Egypt is not as great and also because the price of books is higher here.

AOYE is equally active in the area of information exchange between NGOs at a regional level and it has been chosen as the Secretariat of the Arab NGO Network for Environment and Development which groups 13 Arab countries. It also participates in the Mediterranean Information Office whose members include representatives from countries all around the Mediterranean Sea.

In the field of health, the Right Livelihood Award Foundation rewarded this year George Vithoulkas of Greece for his contribution to the world-wide dissemination of homeopathy. Homeopathy is a system of medicine based on the treatment of a given disease by administering small quantities of a drug which produces the symptoms of that disease in a healthy person. Homeopathy is popular for the treatment of certain ailments in countries like Britain, France, Mexico, Sri Lanka and the US because it avoids the side-effects of usual drugs and is cheaper.

Homeopathy has not been recognised by the Egyptian Medical Syndicate yet and it is, therefore, still difficult to find a doctor practising homeopathy in Egypt. An award was also presented this year to the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia for their campaign to improve conditions in Russia's armed forces and their efforts to end the war in Chechnya.

To this day 62 people and projects from 40 countries have received Right Livelihood Awards and the collective message of these initiatives is one of hope and inspiration.



The late Hassan Fathy, the Right Livelihood Award's first recipient



# Enter Qusseir

## New sites at Luxor

Qusseir, the oldest city on the Red Sea coast, is now being developed into an exclusive tourist resort. Rehab Saad went on a trip to the city

Qusseir owes its importance to Muslim pilgrims, who for centuries used it as a departure point to the Arabian Peninsula. It is located 140km south of Hurghada and 650km southeast of Cairo and is famous for its picturesque landscape and historic harbour. Only in the last few years has Qusseir started to become known as a tourist resort with some deluxe tourist villages. Its attractions are similar to other Red Sea resorts: virgin beaches, coral reefs and untouched marine life. However, unlike other cities on the Red Sea, this one is not quite completely involved in tourism.

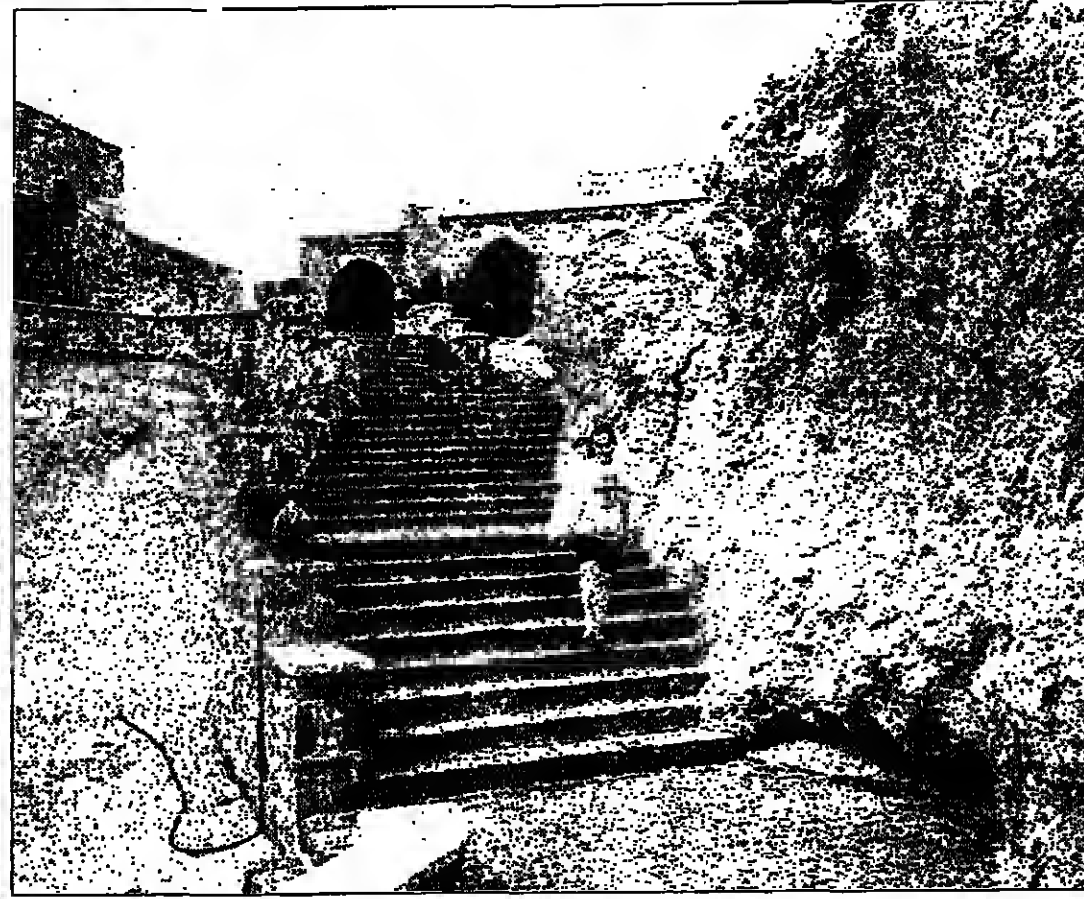
When touring Qusseir, the visitor sees a number of coffee shops, native clothing stores, a single supermarket and a small number of tourist bazaars selling imitation Pharaonic statuettes, scarves, galabiyas and some gold items — a far cry from the Red Sea resort of Hurghada which is awash with tourist-related activities.

"At first people here had no concept of tourism and we found it difficult to recruit workers for our tourist village," said Safwat Badr, general manager of the Movenpick Sirena Beach, the only five-star hotel operating in Qusseir. "Now it is different. People have begun to understand that tourism is beneficial and, among other things, will result in employment for a lot of people. Now we recruit 65 per cent of our workers from Qusseir. The rest come from other governorates," he explained.

Badr highlighted the fact that his hotel, in addition to providing accommodation, offers diverse recreational activities to its guests. One of these are shuttle tours of



The Ottoman fortress of Qusseir is an attraction for tourists



The city is now being developed into an exclusive tourist resort

photos: Jihan Ammar

the old city.

One of the sites in the old city which will be developed into a tourist attraction is the Ottoman fortress. With no entrance fee, it is presently open day and night for tourists who want to know more about Qusseir's history. Initially built to protect Ottoman land, it also housed Napoleon Bonaparte's soldiers during the French Expedition whose task was to prevent supplies sent from the Arabian Peninsula from reaching the Mamelukes. A visitor can see the towers and the many tunnels used by the soldiers to hide from their enemies.

"You know that this tunnel ends in Luxor," said a seven-year-old child playing in

side the castle. "This is a widely-held myth, that these tunnels can lead you to places as far away as Luxor, Safage and even Cairo," said a passer-by who overheard the child.

Other interesting sites open to the public are the Faran Mosque, with its famous Ottoman minaret, and the police station, which was visited by Mohamed Ali Pasha on his trip to Qusseir in 1805. The police station is now the central police station in Qusseir.

The hotel also offers excursions to surrounding areas with experienced guides using jeeps, horses, camels and bicycles. The land surrounding the hotel is picturesque: high mountains with different

coloured strata, where fossil shells mingle with sand and rocks. Lakes and the phosphate mines can be visited, where ruins attest to the large community that once inhabited the area.

These phosphate mines were used by Italians in 1920, and it was they who built the settlement which included schools, Blackboards, as well as the villas of administrators and small worker houses beside the wells, can still be seen by visitors. The railway lines, once used to transport phosphate, run through the hills and mountains.

The tourist village in Qusseir consists of spacious hangar-like structures in the traditional Nubian style, with facades of

rough natural stone — a style intended to be followed by future tourist villages built here, to give the city a special character. "We are going to use local stone only because it is convenient and will give the area a special aura," said Abul-Haggag Abdel-Rehim, head of Qusseir's City Council.

**How to get there:**  
By air: Hurghada airport (120 kms north of Qusseir) or Luxor airport (220 kms west of Qusseir).

**Accommodation:**  
Hotels: Movenpick Sirena Beach (5 stars), Fanadir (3 stars).

On the occasion of Luxor Day last month, the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) opened three recently restored archaeological sites to the public. Located on the West Bank of the Nile, they include the tomb of Ramses VI in the Valley of the Kings, the entrance to the Medinet Habu complex, known as "The Pavilion" and the alabaster baroque chapel of Tutmosis IV.

### Valley of the Kings

"The opening of Ramses VI's tomb after three years of restoration is exciting," said Ali Hassan, secretary-general of the SCA. The tomb is rich in wall reliefs and paintings depicting scenes from the Book of the Dead and other mortuary literature.

Mohamed Ali Salam, director of antiquities in Upper Egypt, said this tomb dates back to the New Kingdom. Although initiated by Ramses V, it was usurped and completed by Ramses VI. The whole tomb has now been restored, including the installation of new wooden floors, ventilation and lighting systems.

### Medinet Habu

Mohamed El-Soghayer, general director of the Upper Egyptian Monuments, said that restoration of the entrance to the Medinet Habu complex was an important cultural addition to Luxor. It provides access to an area which includes numerous structures dating from the 18th Dynasty through Ptolemaic times. The area also houses the mortuary temples of Ramses III and Ramses VI.

El-Soghayer said that restoration concentrated on the collapsed outer wall of the complex, a new lighting system and reconstruction of the pavilion.

### Alabaster baroque chapel

Tutmosis IV's alabaster baroque chapel, restored and reassembled, is now on view at the outdoor museum north of the Great Court in Karnak Temple. This was where the sacred barge of the god Amun was placed by priests when carried in procession from one temple to another. It was found dismantled and placed in Amenhotep III's monumental Third Pylon, along with other monuments also on display at Karnak.

Reported by Nevine El-Aref

### Travellers book guide

## Ancient Egypt in your pocket

BEST-sellers since their first appearance 20 years ago, the *Jill Kamil Guides* are available in new editions, recently updated by the author. The new series of guide books to the ancient monuments of Egypt cover three areas: Sakkarah and Memphis, Luxor and Upper Egypt and Nubia, the latter covering the antiquities from Tel El-Amarna to Abu Simbel.

The author is well-known for her long acquaintance with Egypt, her respect for its people and culture and, in particular, her abiding interest in its history and monuments. She has now managed, within the parameters allowed by her

publisher, to augment the information dispensed in earlier versions of her books, by adding corrections resulting from new interpretations and updating the chapters concerning ongoing archaeological work in these areas.

**Sakkarah and Memphis, the Necropolis and the Ancient Capital:**

This book provides an introductory outline of the major subdivisions of Egyptian history, followed by an examination of the early dynastic mud-brick *mastabas* (tombs) of north Sakkarah. Next it examines the Third Dynasty funerary complex of Djoser, contemporary monuments such as the *mastaba* of Hesi and a section dealing with tomb statuary, emphasising *Sheikh El-Balad*.

The section on the Fifth Dynasty begins with general information about *mastabas*, followed by the examination of several important examples, including Ti, Ptah-hotep, Nefer and newly opened ones on the Unas causeway. The latter lead naturally to the pyramidal complex of Unas itself, which is immediately followed by the sixth and last dynasty of the Old Kingdom — preserved in royal burial complexes and the *mastabas* of important officials.

The New Kingdom use of the Sakkarah necropolis is briefly examined, followed by a look at Late Period monuments, including the Serapeum and Persian shaft tombs.

Turning from the necropolis to the remains of the ancient capital of Memphis, the reader is given a short list of the monuments accessible to visitors. The book ends with a concise description of current work-in-progress at both the Sakkarah necropolis and the site of ancient Memphis.

**Luxor, Ancient Thebes and the Necropolis:**

This book provides a detailed analysis of the temples and tombs of one of the most famous archaeological sites in Egypt. Beginning with the east bank temples, Luxor and Karnak, the author describes the main cult centres, temples dedicated to the god Amun, and their relationship with the New Kingdom state. A brief history of the vicissitudes of the individual temples precedes the descriptions.

In looking at the multitude of structures that compose the Karnak Temple complex, descriptions are accompanied by detailed illustrations of relevant areas, enabling a user to easily identify individual reliefs. At the Theban necropolis, the author summarises the evolution of funerary beliefs and the architecture that reflected them at various stages. The presentation of mortuary temples moves from north to south, and includes those of Seti I, Hatshepsut, Ramses II and Ramses III. Logically progressing from the sites of the mortuary cults to the sites of the hurels themselves, the Valleys of the Kings and Queens are examined next.

The non-royal tombs at Qurna, Assasif and Deir El-Medina, and the Ptolemaic temple at the latter site conclude descriptions of the Theban west bank. The book finishes with a summary of objects in Luxor Museum and news about recent archaeological work in the region.

**Upper Egypt and Nubia, the Antiquities from Amarna to Abu Simbel:**

Although this book details the sites visited on a Nile cruise in Upper Egypt, the author has chosen to follow a general chronological arrangement in keeping with historical events. The first and largest section covers Pharaonic sites — the temples and tombs at Abydos, Aswan, Luxor, Tel El-Amarna and El-Kab. Abydos includes the temples of Seti I and Ramses II, preceded by a description of the religious and historical importance of the site as the burial place of the earliest kings, and the cult centre and pilgrimage site associated with Osiris.

Aswan's Pharaonic significant relationship with Nubia is exemplified by the temple remains on Elephantine Island and the Tombs of the Officials at Qubbet El-Hawa. The section on Luxor is a condensed version of the previous book entirely devoted to Luxor and described above.

The temple remains and tombs at El-Amarna illustrate the reign of Akhenaten, while El-Kab is represented by the New Kingdom rock tombs east of the main temple site.

Abu Simbel and other monuments of Nubia, threatened by the construction of the High Dam, and moved to a safe location by UNESCO, form the last section of this part of the book. The Upper Egyptian temples from the periods of Ptolemaic and Roman rule form the second part, including those of Dendera, Deir El-Medina, Esna, Edfu and Kom Ombo. A much longer description of the Temple of Isis at Philae follows, including its cultic and historical significance, the efforts to protect it from flooding and even the paraphrase of a folk tale related to the island.

The third part of the guide deals with the Christian period in Egypt as represented by the Upper Egyptian monasteries of Deir El-Muharrag, the Red and White Monasteries near Sohag, Christian remains at Dendera and Luxor and St Simeon's Monastery in Aswan. A comprehensive background on various aspects of Christianity in Egypt, including the discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices, augments this section.

The *Jill Kamil Guides* are particularly useful as guides to the antiquities in the various regions of Egypt. They provide concise presentations of important monuments at each site. The reader will find that significant tombs and temples are placed in both historical and cultural context. However, what sets these volumes apart from other guidebooks of comparable size and scope is the way that they serve as introductions to the history and culture of Ancient Egypt in a succinct and informative format.

These books will conveniently fit in most travel or camera bags, or even a pocket. Clear black and white photographs, interspersed throughout the text with plentiful maps and plans, allow the traveller to locate sites and monuments with ease.

(Available from EIP-Longman, Sphinx and all major bookshops. LE 25 each.)

Reviewed by Edwin Brock  
(The writer is former director of the Canadian Institute in Egypt and has worked for 15 years at archaeological sites in Egypt.)

A permanent exhibition of old Alexandrian currency was opened last month at the Graeco-Roman Museum in collaboration with the German mission in Alexandria. Nevine El-Aref reports

## Alexandrian coins on show

A permanent exhibition of 200 bronze and silver coins used by Alexandrians in the Roman period was established at the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria. The exhibit is the first of its kind in the museum and displays coins which date back to 30 BC.

The unique coins, invalid in Rome, were minted specially for use in Alexandria. "For this reason they are called the Alexandrian coin," said Samira Abdel-Ra'ouf, curator of the coin department at the Graeco-Roman Museum.

The collection was temporarily on display for two weeks in the museum's main hall in an effort to highlight its historical importance. It has now been transferred to Room 24 where it will enrich the original

collection exhibited.

The coins are on display in two revolving, glass-protected, wooden cabinets that provide a view of both faces. The first case exhibits the 200 historic coins, while the second displays photos showing the restoration carried out to prepare them for exhibition. It also shows the shape of the coin before and after restoration.

"This new coin collection represents an archaeological map for Alexandrian antiquities," said Abdel-Ra'ouf, explaining that the coins are imprinted with major Alexandrian historical sites like the Qait Bey Citadel and the Alexandrian eastern port.

"Some of these monuments have been

totally destroyed like the Isis Temple in Silsila, while others have not yet been discovered, like the famous Alexandria Light-house and the Statue of Agassia Daymon, a Roman deity," said Abdel-Ra'ouf.

The collection also shows the style of Alexandrian buildings of the era. Abdel-Ra'ouf said that the German mission is now producing a booklet about the coin collection which will be sold at the museum.

"The coin hall has a well-displayed collection," said Rosaline Aumoniou, an Italian tourist who was visiting the museum, adding that the unique collection provides a glimpse of Alexandria as it was in its heyday.

## How to get there

### Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

### Super Jet

Super Jet stations are located in Almaza (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramses Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurghada and Sharm. Tel. 772-463.

**Cairo-Alexandria**

Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 5pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE30 thereafter. A VIP bus with phone access leaves Almaza at 7.15am. Tickets from Almaza LE28; from the airport LE32 each way.

**Cairo-Marsa Matruh**

Services at 7am departure and 7pm return from Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE36. Cairo-Sidi Abdel-Rahman Services at 6.30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3.45pm. Tickets LE32. Cairo-Port Said Services every half hour from 6am to 8am; then 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramses Street. Tickets LE35 each way.

**Alexandria-Port Said**

Service 6.45am, from Ramses Square in Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

**Cairo-Hurghada**

Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almaza. Departs Hurghada noon and 5pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm, LE45 thereafter, both each way.

**Alexandria-Hurghada**

Service 8pm, from Ramses Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurghada 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.

**Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh**

Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

**East Delta Bus Company**

Buses travel to North/South Sinai, Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qalati (near Ramses Square), Almaza and Tahrir Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbassiya Square. Tel. 482-4753.

**Cairo-Ismailia**

Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qalati, then Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5.25, one way.

**Cairo-Suez**

Services every half hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qalati, then Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5.25, one way.

**Cairo-Arish**

Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qalati, then Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5.25, one way.

**Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh**

Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

**Cairo-Hurghada**

Service 8am, from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets deluxe bus LE31.

**West Delta Bus Company**

Stations at Tahrir and Almaza. Tel. 243-1846.

**Cairo-Hurghada**

Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm.

### 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

**Cairo-Safage**

Services 9am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

**Cairo-Qassidi**

Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

**Cairo-Luxor**

Service 5am. Tickets LE35 one way.

**Cairo-Aswan**

Service 5pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

**Trains**

Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramses Station. Tel. 147 or 373-3535.

**Cairo-Luxor-Aswan**

"French" deluxe trains with sleepers. Services to Luxor and Aswan 7.40am and 9pm (reaching Luxor 8.40am and 8am, Aswan 8.40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians; to Aswan LE300 for foreigners; LE141 for Egyptians. "French" deluxe trains without sleepers. Services to Luxor and Aswan 8.40pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor, first class LE51; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE63; second class LE37.

**Cairo-Alexandria**

"Turkish" trains. VIP trains: Service 8am. Tickets first class LE37 with a meal; LE22 without a meal.

Standard trains: Services 9am, 11am, noon, 3pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE32; second class LE17.

"French" trains. Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets first class LE20; second class LE12.

**Cairo-Port Said**

Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets first class LE45; second class LE26.

**EgyptAir**

There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check Egyptian: Adly 390-0999; Opera 390-2444; or Hilton 772410.

**Cairo-Aswan**

Tickets LE351 for Egyptians, LE1143 for foreigners, both round-trip.

**Cairo-Luxor**

Tickets LE239 for Egyptians, LE829 for foreigners, both round-trip.

**Cairo-Hurghada**

Tickets LE279 for Egyptians, LE899 for foreigners, both round-trip.

**Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh**

Tickets LE287 for Egyptians, LE945 for foreigners, both round-trip.

**Seasonal deals**

**Hurghada**

Sometime beach resorts. Special offer LE133 per person per night, half board including taxes and service.

**Amagador Club**

Special offer LE105 per person per night, half board including taxes and service.

**Sharm El-Sheikh**

Sometime beach resort. No special rates. A Christmas dinner at the Citadel Restaurant will be served. Cookies, chocolate, and special Christmas cakes will be sold.

**Travel agencies:**

Karnak. Special trips to Lebanon, Beirut. LE1310 for five days including air fare and accommodation in a four star hotel.

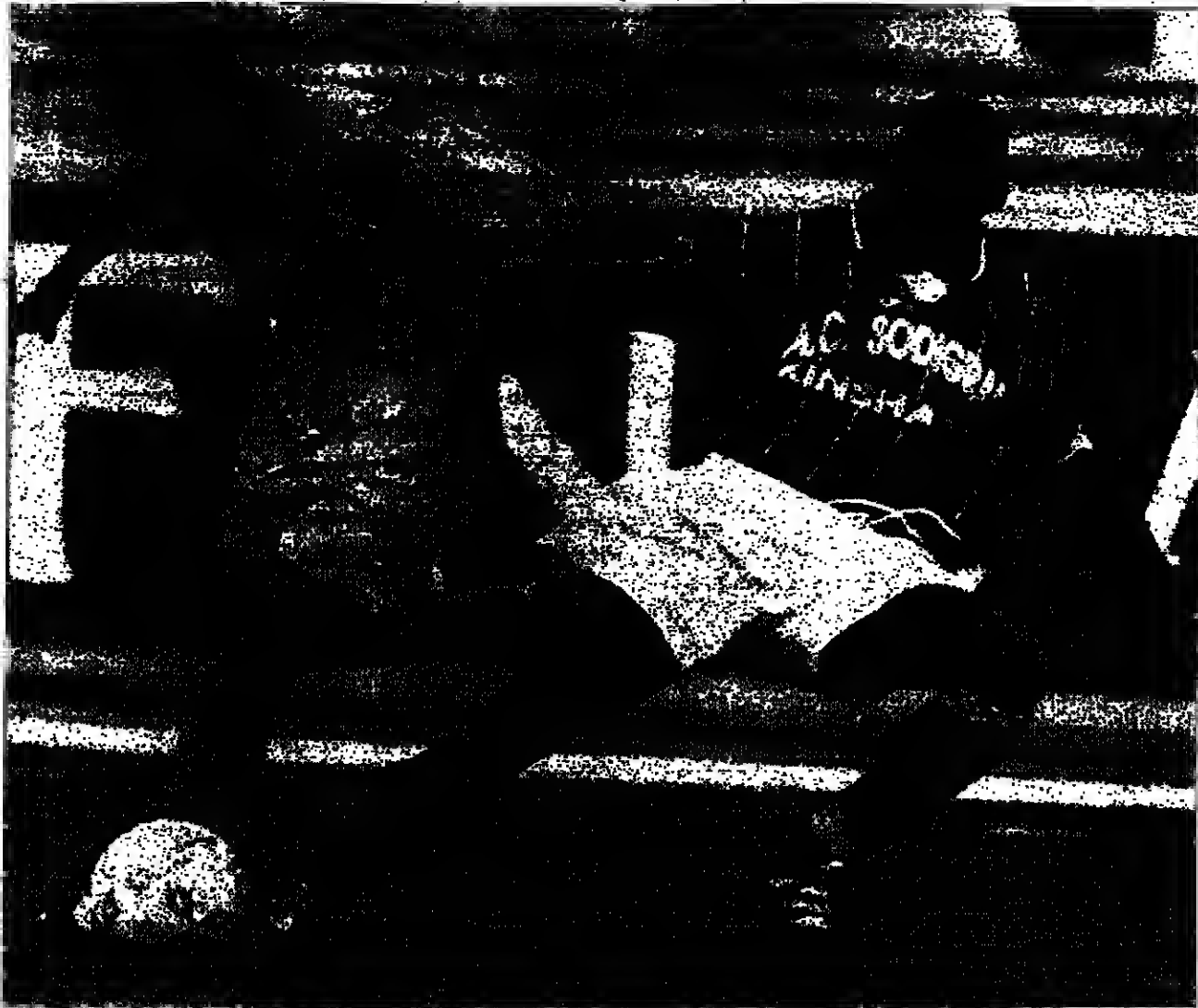
Compiled by Rehab Saad

## EGYPT AIR

Telephone numbers of EGYPT AIR offices in governorates:

Abu Simbel Sales Office:	324836-324735
Alexandria Offices: Ramal:	483357-483978
Gleem:	5865461-5865434
Airport Office:	4218464-4227886-4282837-4281969
Aswan Office:	315888/1/2/3/4
Airport Office:	488387-488568
Assut Office:	323151-322711-324888-329487
Mansoura Office:	363978-363733
Hurghada Office:	443591/4
Airport Office:	442883-443597
Ismailia Office:	328357-221958-221951/2-328356
Luxor Office:	388588/1/2/3/4
Airport Office:	388567/8
Luxor Office Karnak:	382340
Marsa Matruh Office:	934398
Menoufia Office (Sheikh El Kham):	233382-233523-233522
New Valley Office:	6887991/695
Port Said Office:	224128-222878-228921
Port Said Office Karnak:	238833-239978
Sharm El Sheikh Office:	686314-686489
Airport Office:	686488
Taba Office:	06853818-538111
Direct:	5783628
Tanta Office:	311758/311788
Zakazik Office:	349829-349838/1





Mohamed Ouda (left) and Ali Ashour with the team holding their third African trophy.



Photo: Mohamed Wassef

## Signed, sealed and delivered

To the delight of Egyptian fans, the Arab Contractors handed Sodigraf of Zaire a signal 4-0 defeat in the final match of the African Winners Cup

Less than 10 minutes into the final match of the African Winners Cup, Arab Contractors' Ali Ashour presented fans with the first goal of what was destined to be a spectacular 4-0 rout over Sodigraf of Zaire. Prime Minister Kamal El-Ghazali, who doubles as head of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, topped the list of dignitaries among the 40,000 spectators who watched as the Contractors nabbed their third African Winners Cup trophy.

Ashour's surprise goal was followed shortly by another from Mohamed Ouda. The two key players' early scores prompted Sodigraf to keep a close guard on their movements. But their efforts had the same effect of a testis chasing a freight train, as Ashour and Ouda, scoring all four of the game's goals between them, emerged as the outstanding players of the match.

Zaire's thrashing may have partially been a result of the absence of their main scorers, but with an injury. Still, the two early goals, which took everyone by surprise, instigated a concerted push on the part of the Zairians. Sodigraf began a ferocious assault on the Egyptian goalkeeper, but the Contractors paid them in kind with dynamic counterattacks. Yet the Contractors made the almost fatal error of leaving the right side exposed for a significant amount of time. The punitious Ahmed Saber thwarted Zaire's attempt on the Contractors goal at least twice before

the holes in the Egyptian team's defences were shored up. The Sodigraf team, frustrated by their lack of success, were incapable of deflecting the two cannonballs fired into the Zairian net by Mohamed Ouda and Ali Ashour. Midfielder Ashour, 23, scored the first goal in the 7th minute of the first half from an indirect free kick. Ashour, who began his soccer career with Zamalek's juniors team, placed his second goal and the third for his team from a pen-

alty kick at the 10th minute of the second half. The other outstanding player of the encounter, Ouda, scored the game's second and fourth goals. His first goal and his team's second came in the 25th minute of the first half. His next, and the match's last, came at the 30th minute, from a perfect lob described by many as the best goal of the game.

The team's fans rejoiced in their conquest by roaming the streets of Cairo until well past midnight. It was the first triumph for the Arab Contractors in the tournament in well over a decade. They last held the Cup trophy in the early eighties when they won it for two years consecutively. Soccer fans and experts alike agreed that the game was one fit for the final of the African Winners Cup. Although Sodigraf, in the end, walked off the field with four balls in their net, their aggressive defence and speedy attacks provided edge-of-the-seat suspense.

## Four for four

The spectacle of the 98-pound weakling refereeing the heavyweights at the 4th Egypt International Boxing Championship had the crowd rolling in the aisles. But the performances of the Egyptian boxers had them cheering

The sport of boxing in Egypt was given a boost a few months ago when the Al-Ahram Organisation sponsored the comeback bout of British boxer Chris Eubank in Cairo. But events such as the 4th Egypt International Boxing Championship, a virtual 8-day feast for the hardcore fan and couch potato alike, are the spawning grounds for home-grown talent. Since its inauguration four years ago the tournament has grown and today it can boast of the participation of champions from 13 countries. Nearly 100 boxers entered the ring at the Olympic Centre in Madi's indoor hall, representing Tunisia, Algeria, Syria, the Philippines, Germany, Morocco, Jordan, Ukraine, Lebanon, Kuwait, Palestine and Saudi Arabia. Egypt was represented by the national team, the youth team, EgyptAir and the Armed Forces team. The boxers seized upon the opportunity to fight in the tournament to size up opponents and hone technical skills for the upcoming Mediterranean Games in Italy.

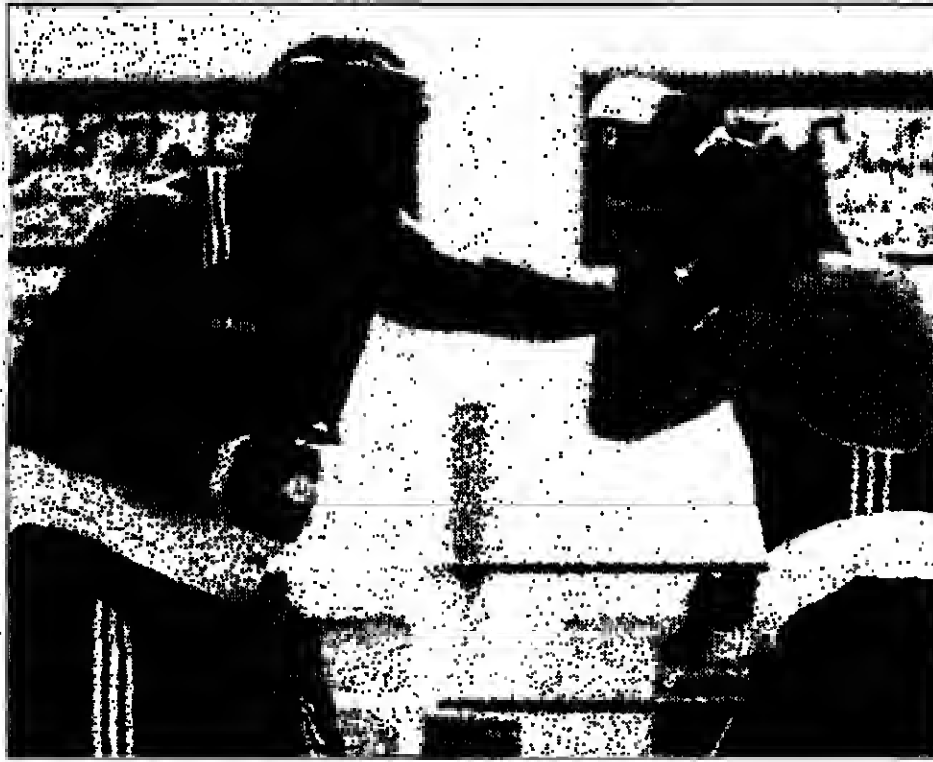
The Egyptian national got first blood with 5 gold, 3 silver and 4 bronze, followed by Tunisia with 4 gold and Algeria in third with 2 gold and 2 silver. In the 48kg category, Algeria's Hassan Al-Galas nabbed the gold after thrashing the Philippines' Efrén Desierto. Egypt's Eid Fikry, in the 51kg, bested Sonny Dolonito of the Philippines for the gold. His compatriot Mohamed Ibrahim beat Al-

geria's Bowlehla Abdel Aziz in the 54kg. The failure of Ben Maghouth, the Algerian silver medalist at the 1995 World Championship in Berlin, to make it to the finals surprised all. Maghouth, the African and Arab champion in his weight, was eliminated in the semi-final by Egypt's Salah Abdel-Bari. The Egyptian went on to be named best boxer after he outspurred Syria's Youssef Hamdi in the final. "He's a great talent and I think he'll be the best Egyptian boxer in the coming years," commented national team technical manager Abdel-Aziz Ghoneim. "He is only 18 but he is very promising. He is also one of the most important athletes we're preparing for Sydney," he added.

Egypt's Mahdi Farid was defeated in the 60kg category by Ali Abou Mohamed of Algeria. Fellow Algerian Hamdi Fouad thrashed EgyptAir's Ayman El-Sawy in the 63.5kg. In the 67kg, Egypt's Khalid Abdel-Hamid triumphed over EgyptAir's Mohamed Heikal. Tunisia's Mohamed Mansouri was able to best Egypt's Ali Nassef to win the gold in the 71kg. Other winners included Syria's Rhab' Al-Youssef in the 75kg, Algeria's Bahari Mohamed in the 81kg by walkover, and Amir Mustafa of Egypt in the 91kg.

Ahmed El-Sayed emerged as Egypt's pride and joy when he claimed the over-91kg trophy after besting EgyptAir's Ahmed Abdel-Samed. At the opening bell, El-Sayed, nicknamed "Tyson", was heavily favoured by the raucous spectators. He awed fans with his technical brilliance and earned their respect for winning the match without causing injury in an overblown display. A moment of levity lightened the intense mood of the bout — some were calling for blood — when the boxers entered the ring with the referee. The diminutive official was dwarfed by the two boxers who weighed in at over 100kg and stood 190cm tall.

The tournament highlighted the health of Egyptian boxing and it is hoped it will continue to inspire upcoming talent. Hosam Refai, head of the technical committee and national team head, said that "the technical level of the event was very high... New talents will be selected for the national team according to the results of the event." He added that the national team will start preparing for the Mediterranean Games almost immediately.



Ahmed El-Sayed, (L) crushing his opponent in the over-91 kg



## Becker better, you bet

GERMANY'S Boris Becker claimed his first ever Grand Slam victory steamrolling over his Croatian opponent Goran Ivanisevic 6-3, 6-4, 6-4. Becker rode the support of a partisan crowd of 10,000 to victory in his hometown, Munich. The three-time Wimbledon champion and former world No 1, as reported by AP, took an hour and 24 minutes to secure the 1.56 million dollar winner's cheque in the season's richest tournament. Becker also earned a 250,000 cheque for entering as a Grand Slam winner — he won this year's Australian Open — bringing the total winnings to 1.85 million dollars.

For his part, Ivanisevic said 29-year-old Becker's game was simply too strong, and refused to blame health concerns for his loss. "I didn't manage to read his serve today and he returned mine well. He was simply too strong," said Ivanisevic, the 1995 Grand Slam Cup winner. Commenting on his "flower pot" hairstyle, unique to the ATP tour, the Croatian said: "The hairstyle brings me good luck. I won the Kremlin Cup with it."

"I felt good from the start, I returned well and I was getting my first serves in," Becker said. The German added that his goal for the next year was to try and rival American world number one Pete Sampras, whom he described as the best player of all time.

The tournament brings together the 16 men with the best record in the four Grand Slam tournaments of the year — the Australian, French and US Opens and Wimbledon.

**Lisez**

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□ Scandale à répétition

Les fissures de la politique de l'habitat

□ Parlement

Les droits politiques en débat

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Deux rives, deux choix

□ Nihad Bahgat

Une vie dans le décor

□ Analphabétisme

Un Egyptien sur deux

Rédacteur en Chef  
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## Samuel Habib:

Tolerance may not be the main goal. But this doctor of divinity has a knack for bringing people together



photo: Randa Sheath

# New ministrations

Social services are often monopolised by religious institutions which provide assistance to the groups of their faith. This is a man with a different philosophy.

Last summer, around 130 people, all invited by Dr Samuel Habib, participated in a conference in Alexandria. The friendly atmosphere of the group came as a pleasant surprise. Imams, clergy, scientists, men of letters and journalists were all discussing the most controversial issues with the greatest cordiality. The guests included stubborn secularists and persistent pietists. Who was the man who made it happen?

Samuel Habib is an ordained minister with honorary doctorates in divinity, law and peacemaking from the US and Canada. Apart from theology, his educational background includes journalism and social services. He dresses in smart city clothes; he could easily be a doctor, a lawyer or a successful businessman.

"I invited Dr Mohamed Sayed Tantawi,

the Grand Mufti of Egypt, to give a talk on development at the Evangelical Church in Heliopolis, to show that both Christians and Muslims are welcome to work and fraternise in church, to serve the country," says Habib. These words sum up the concept of the social services and development organisation he heads.

Habib started the Coptic Evangelical Organisation for Social Services (CEOSS) in December 1992 on the strength of \$12,000 a year donated by the US National Council of Churches and \$30,000 a year (for three years) from the US Women's Guild of the Presbyterian Church. His Egyptian friends teasingly advised him to drop the idea of CEOSS, "unless he had a millionaire uncle to leave him the necessary funds", but he succeeded in obtaining additional funds from other European sources.

Initially, his interest was to combat illiteracy in rural communities. He followed the American-based Frank C Laubach

Movement for the outlines of his campaign. This movement invited organisations from seventy countries around the world to combat illiteracy, each choosing its own method. A comprehensive study would then be made of all these methods and their success, to be distributed for review and possible guidance.

Before plunging headlong into the campaign, Habib took time off to acquaint himself with the economic and social conditions of the rural communities. He wanted to study peasants' lives and observe whether they were interested in literacy programmes. His first choice of locale for this experiment was Hirz, a small village in Minya Governorate which has an all-Christian population of about one thousand.

The village's poverty shocked him. Illiteracy was definitely not the only major problem: poverty and poor hygiene also required prompt remedies. Other villages with an all-Muslim population revealed similar conditions. Habib decided that

"the dilemma of the rural communities was a national problem, equally dire for both Christians and Muslims, and therapy was to be administered to both equally."

He took the matter to heart and decided to act positively. Reviewing the social services provided by other religious organisations, Habib noted that these organisations merely doled out money at regular intervals to the needy of their own faith, without providing any work opportunities. This kind of assistance made the poor even more dependant on the small stipends they received.

Habib decided to introduce a new concept in his nascent organisation — literacy and development for the entire community. Government officials and religious organisations alike received his suggestions with some apprehension. "The Muslims thought we were Evangelists, the Orthodox felt we were proselytising, the Catholics were wary and the Protestants were not satisfied with a small piece of the cake. It required a lot of work and persistence to calm these fears before all those concerned began to trust the organisation," says Habib.

What started out as a literacy campaign developed into a wider programme for integrated development. The organisation's activities increased with the facilities afforded by Sadat's open-door policy and Mubarak's reforms. Agriculture, education, health and technical services were all included in the programme. Foreign experts and technicians were invited by CEOSS "to study the needs of Egyptian society and draw up training programmes enabling unemployed university graduates to establish their own small businesses," says Habib, describing the Talaat Harb Centre. CEOSS now serves a wide variety of Egyptians: from agriculturalists to small business owners, from students to homemakers. Its activities have spread from the rural areas to the city.

Helped by his wife, Fawziya, Habib set out to train young men and women to act as leaders in rural communities. He encourages them to further their training, either locally or abroad. Their job is to help the communities solve their social problems and implement the projects. "I dare say a number of our staff could be considered as national and international leaders in development," Habib remarks. His goal has been to unite the members

of the community and encourage cooperation. The leaders encourage the target groups to form their own decision-making committees; these must include imams, clergymen, men and women. "Again, this concept was alien to the rural communities, especially the inclusion of women. They are not used to having women sit on a panel and discuss matters as equals with men. Convincing the committees of the importance of women's role in society requires strenuous efforts and may take up to a year to succeed." But insist he does, and women are active in the communities served by CEOSS.

The committee leaders must also accustom people to dialogue. They hold meetings for open discussion of particular issues affecting the welfare of the community. Decisions and recommendations are binding. One issue discussed openly at these meetings was female genital mutilation. Although this procedure is widespread in rural areas, discussing it openly was taboo and many members were too embarrassed to join in the discussion. Persistence and emphasis on the brutality of the operation had positive effects. One woman committee member in Maghagha took the lead and insisted that the operation be stopped. She further suggested paying the midwives who usually perform the operation for refusing to perform it, thus ensuring their consent.

The projects presented to the committees are varied. Some are income-generating, like bee-keeping, animal husbandry, crop management, land conservation, poultry-rearing, the carpentry factory in Minya trains carpenters who turn out furniture for a wide variety of establishments, including five-star hotels. Other projects are not aimed primarily at raising money, but at improving the community's quality of life: family planning, health care, education, nutrition and diet awareness. At present 40 per cent of the budget comes from local subsidies; the rest is donated by European and American organisations, and it is expected that before the turn of the century, profits from the income-generating projects will make CEOSS self-sufficient (the carpentry factory alone is expected to net one million pounds which will be turned over to further development).

Habib insists that "Services are provided and projects implemented regardless of the recipient communities' re-

ligion. At the same time, if a mosque or church is already providing services, CEOSS staff join the personnel there and help out." Even without a millionaire for an uncle, Habib and the staff have become recognised in many local and international circles — religious and non-religious alike — as a serious non-governmental organisation working to help the poor.

In order to adapt to change, Habib and his organisation have taken on the responsibility of holding conferences and seminars for interfaith dialogue. These conferences are presided over by Muslims and Christians chosen by CEOSS personnel. The topics range from ways of overcoming religious extremism and tension, to the role of religion in communication, social problems, or a vision for the future of the country. The minutes and the discussions that ensue are then published and distributed to the interested.

Of Habib's organisational aptitude, Professor Osama El-Kholi remarks: "It is dazzling, if not downright confusing, to find three seminars running at the same time, all working smoothly, and then to attend a lunch arranged very efficiently for over two hundred people, and then to sit in on a seminar where one sees members of the Coptic society sitting next to members of the Qur'anic Society, a university professor from Assiut next to a peasant from Aswan and women in all forms of dress — ranging from highly conservative to the more modern and casual — all actively engaged in discussion of environmental issues. This, to say the least, is an unusual achievement."

Habib is a very disciplined liberal. He has a clear vision of his goal and does not allow himself to deviate from his principles. His son Rafiq has gone against his father's philosophy, publicly expressing his opposition in nine books and tens of articles. This is a sore spot of sorts for Habib, but the family's warmth of feeling for Rafiq remains undiminished.

Samuel Habib has played a major role in bringing religious tolerance to social services. In a field marked out into communalist plots by the major players, he may be a disruptive force. But to the communities benefiting from CEOSS's services, this could well be a definite advantage.

Profile by Samia Abdennour

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## Pack of cards

by Madame Sosostri



♥ Honouring the arts and artists is a well-established tradition at Al-Ahram. It was therefore no surprise this week to see in the foyer of our main building 72 members of the Association of Al-Ghouri Artists gathered to exhibit works covering all plastic arts from painting, to photography, to sculpture. I hardly had time to express my admiration to Chairman of Al-Ahram Organisation and chief-editor of Al-Ahram, Ibrahim Nade about to officially open the exhibition when he was joined by Abdel-Qader Melkhar, head of the association and organiser of the exhibition. Leaving them to their serious tête-à-tête, I graciously mingled. So many distinguished guests! I had to tear myself away however to catch up on a different art, that of printing. As a conference organised by the Association of Journalist Graduates, 120 years of printing were being celebrated. Khalil Sabat, our own Samir Sobhi and Al-Ahram's Taymour Abdel-Hassila, filled us in on the ins and outs of printing in Egypt, praising Al-Ahram for its ability to keep up with the most advanced technology. And guess what? Our own Weekly got a special mention. I am considering adding high-tech to my numerous titles.

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